



The Father-Land Series

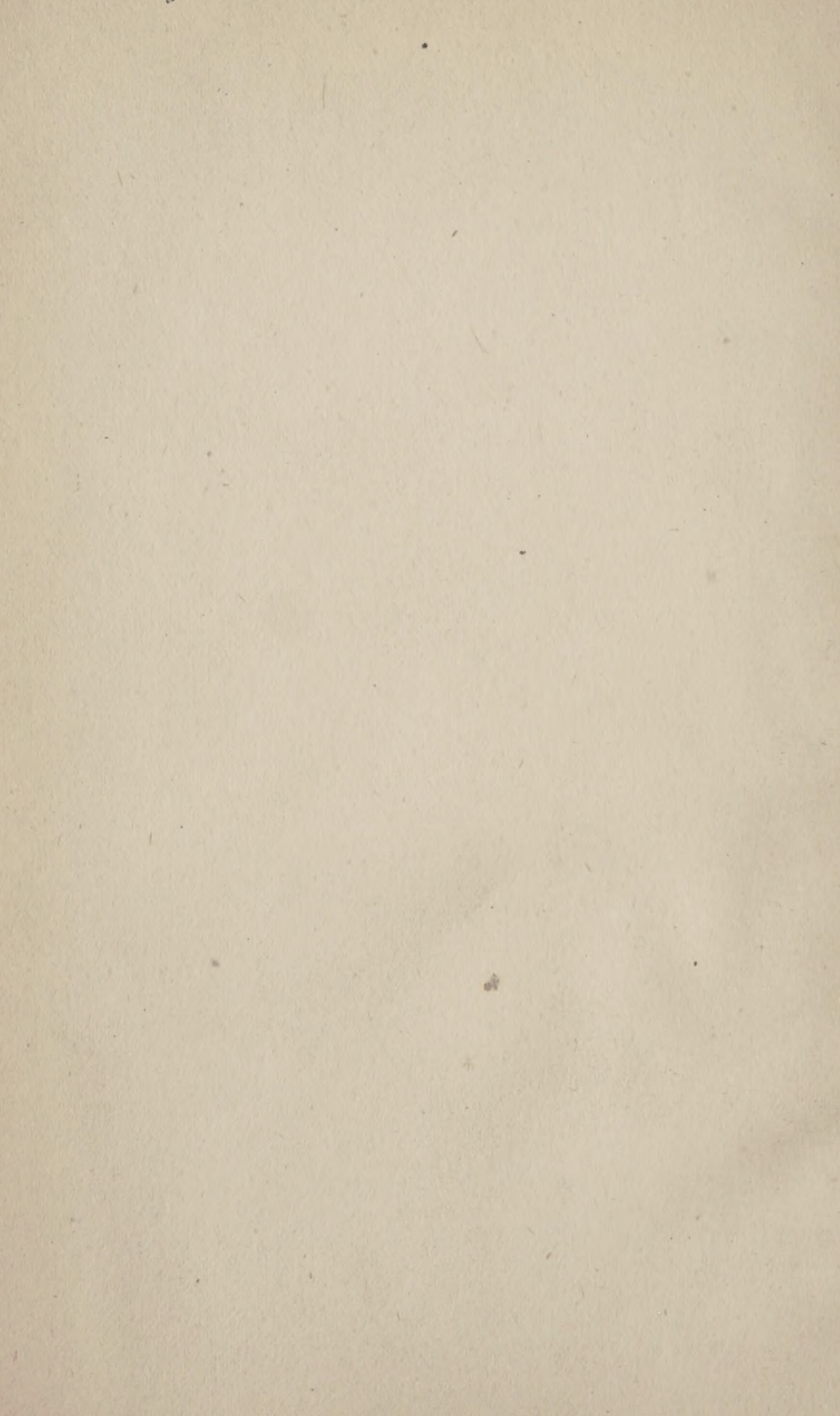
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The Fatherland Series.



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Maternal **L**ove.

From the German.

PHILADELPHIA:

LUTHERAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

1870.

MATERNAL LOVE.

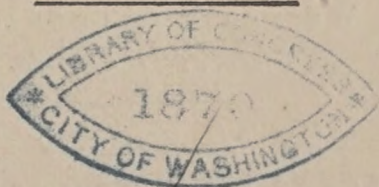
Translated from the German

OF

FRANZ HOFFMAN,

BY

REV. H. J. H. LEMCKE.



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
LITTLE MADELON.....	9

CHAPTER II.

MATERNAL LOVE.....	29
--------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW HOME.....	64
-------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERFORMERS.....	84
---------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

NEW TRIALS.....	111
-----------------	-----

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGGAR BOY.....	134
---------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
A HAPPY MEETING.....	155

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END.....	187
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MATERNAL LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE MADELON.

THE day was just beginning to dawn when the stage-coach from Strasburg came dashing into Paris. The inside passengers, roused from sleep, with the curiosity of strangers began to look out of the windows at the long rows of houses, as they passed rapidly through the streets.

“So we are really in Paris,” said one of the passengers. “Well, I am glad we can escape from this narrow box, for I am really stiff and exhausted by this long ride.”

“Ah, this is Paris!” cheerfully exclaimed a

delicate voice that sounded like a silver bell —“this is Paris! Oh how glad I am! I shall soon be at my uncle’s!”

The passengers who had entered the coach during the night, looking round for the speaker, beheld, crowded into a corner of the stage, a charming little girl with bright and laughing eyes. There was something interesting about the child; so young, with its round face and ruddy cheeks, and its flaxen curls, which, though a little disheveled by the night travel, hung gracefully about its sunny face.

“Most charming little one! A real angel!” said the passengers as they patted its rosy cheeks. “So young, and yet on a journey in the stage-coach! Are you alone, dear child?”

“Yes, alone,” replied the girl, with quiet simplicity. “Mother brought me to the post-house in Strasburg, and the conductor

promised to take care of me and see me safely to Paris, and he has kept his word. Here I am, and I shall soon find my uncle!"

The passengers entertained themselves in a pleasant and friendly manner with the little one until the coach entered the yard of the post-house. Here every one, concerned about his own business, ceased to notice the little girl. The conductor lifted her out of the coach, put her down on one side, where she would be safe from the throng of wagons passing in and out, and told her to wait until he had time to advise and help her further, for at that moment his hands were full of work. The little one promised to wait patiently, and she remained quietly at her post, where there was everything to afford her entertainment. The spacious post-house yard was continually thronged with people passing to and fro; passengers came and went, and the crowd and activity of the place increased

as the day advanced. However, the little wanderer at last became impatient, and looked about anxiously for the conductor who on her journey had taken such an interest in her. At last he came hastening back with hurried steps.

“Quick, dear child!” he said; “where have you your letter? I have received orders to proceed this very moment to Lyons, and I have scarcely five minutes to spend with you. The letter! the letter, dear little one! I cannot take you myself to your uncle, but I will procure some responsible person to accompany you.”

The little one put her hand into the pocket of her cloak, but withdrew it again with an anxious look. “Oh, the letter! Yesterday,” she said, “it was still in this pocket, but now it is gone!”

“For heaven’s sake, little one, you surely have not been so unfortunate as to lose it!”

exclaimed the conductor. "Search your other pocket quickly!"

The girl searched here, there, everywhere, but the letter did not make its appearance. "It must have slipped from me," she said, finally. "Perhaps we may find it in the stage-coach."

"Why the coach has long since returned to Strasburg!" exclaimed the conductor. "Unfortunate child, what is now to be done? Do you not know, at least, your uncle's name?"

"I knew it," replied the little one, thinking; "but I do not recollect it now!"

"Well, this is a pretty affair!" exclaimed the conductor. "Poor child, what are we to do in this case? My time is up! I must go, or I shall lose my situation and with it my living; and here comes the coach! Dear child, God help you; I can stay no longer! Think; and if you should recollect your uncle's

name, apply to the first kind person, and let him conduct you to your uncle. Willing as I am to assist you, I cannot do it. Here is the coach. God preserve you, little one! Try to recollect the name, and all may yet be well!"

"Oh, don't leave me, conductor!" said the child, folding her little hands imploringly.

"I must, my dear!" replied the conductor. "Do you hear? the postilion is already sounding the horn and I must go. May God take you under his protecting care! I can stay no longer!" He departed with hasty steps. "Poor child, poor child!" he muttered to himself. "But I cannot help her. How careless to lose that letter!" With one leap he mounted the coach that was to convey him to Lyons. The postilion lashed the horses with his whip, and the coach started off at a rapid rate. The little girl, consternated at losing so suddenly her only

friend, looked after him with a sad and wistful countenance.

There stood the poor child, alone and helpless in the great city of Paris, surrounded by strangers who scarce gave her a passing notice. She did not know what to do. She sat down upon a stone bench, wrung her little hands, burst into tears, and sobbed as though her heart would break. Suddenly a bright idea seemed to strike the little girl. "I will do that," she said, wiping away her tears. "I will return to Strasburg to my mother. So many coaches depart from here, and surely some one will take me along." With a more cheerful face she looked about her, and sprang toward a post-house officer, whom she recognized by his uniform.

"Dear sir," she pleaded, "I should like very much to return to Strasburg; pray make the necessary arrangements for me."

"You want to go to Strasburg?" replied

the man, surprised. "You must be foolish, little one."

"Oh no, I must go to Strasburg to mother! Oh, please help me!"

"Then come," said the man; "I will take you to the office, where you can have yourself registered. You have money, have you not?"

"Yes, I have still two francs!" exclaimed the little one, joyfully, as she now began to hope. "Two francs! I do not need more for eating and drinking!"

"But, you foolish little thing, how do you intend to pay your fare to Strasburg?" exclaimed the man, in astonishment. "Have you really nothing more than these two francs?"

"No, nothing more! But, sir, I am so small the stage-coach will surely take me free of charge. I will crowd into one corner, or crawl under the seat, in order that I may

again return to my mother. Pray, dear sir, let me ride with you!"

"You are a little fool," replied the man, roughly, and left her. The child was overcome with a feeling of desertion and loneliness, and again wept bitterly.

"Why are you crying so?" said a harsh voice to the unfortunate, forsaken child.

"Oh dear! I must go to Strasburg, and the stage-coach will not take me because I have no money!" sobbed the little one. "What am I to do? I know no person in Paris, not even my uncle, whom I cannot find!"

"Nonsense!" said the man. "You want to beg, that's all. Away with you out of the post-house yard, or I will have you turned out!" As the poor little one made no effort to leave, the rude fellow took her by the arm, hurried her through the yard, and, unmoved by her tears and entreaties, unfeelingly cast her out upon the street. "Now don't let

yourself be seen here again!" he cried out, with a threatening gesture. "If you come here again, you will be whipped!"

Poor child! There she stood upon the street, not knowing where to look for a friend to pity or help her in this time of need. Far away from her mother, in the strange, great, cold, unfriendly city, where the unfortunate little one was so roughly treated, without money, without a friend, it was not surprising that her tears flowed faster and more bitterly than before, and that in utter sorrow she sank down in one corner, and, sobbing, hid her little face in her hands. And yet the poor child was unable to understand the extent of her hopeless condition. She only felt the desolation of being forsaken by the whole world, but what result might flow from it the poor girl knew not. She was really too young seriously to look into the future. The trouble of the present had overpowered her.

And yet what sufferings were still in store for her, if no kind heart should take pity on her and shield her from the greater calamities that were impending!

What could the poor little thing do to appease her hunger? Where was she to find lodgings during the night? The autumn was far advanced and the nights rough and cold. Inexorable death was everywhere on the watch for the child, and her tender youth and inexperience were wholly unable to avert the impending perils. Perhaps in a few days she would be found dead in some hiding-place, or under the portals of a church, and then be laid in the stranger's grave, and forgotten.

There she sat crouched into a corner of the street, and hundreds, yea, thousands, of people passing by, with nothing more for her than a cold and hasty glance. What concern was the strange child to them? Every one had to care for himself, and there was little time

to look after the welfare of others. No helping hand was extended to the forsaken little one; not even a word of sympathy or an inquiry about her lonely sorrow. In the midst of a great city, amongst over a million of people, the child was left alone and forsaken in her misery, and, as it seemed, exposed to certain death. There was no help and no hope of deliverance except from God. But God does help where all human helpers fail, and his angels were near to deliver sooner even than she hoped.

It was about the hour of noon when a comely, handsome lad of about fifteen or sixteen years came passing up the street. His clothing was miserable—wooden shoes upon his feet; his old, worn-out jacket, like his wide linen pantaloons, had been patched in many places; an old worn-out cap covered his black curly hair, and his shirt collar, which was turned back over the collar of his jacket,

was not the finest linen; but notwithstanding all this, the lad presented a goodly appearance, and his fine, manly face made one overlook his homely dress. He was pulling a small wagon behind him, to which was also harnessed a large dog. The wagon was loaded with coal, and whilst the lad cried out, with a clear voice: "Coal, coal—buy coal! Low price—excellent coal—the best and cheapest coal!" his dark, sparkling eyes glanced on every side, so as not to pass unnoticed a buyer who perchance might need his coal. Thus he came where the little girl sat crouched in the corner, weeping and lamenting in tones that might have touched a heart of stone, but, as it seems, had not thus far arrested the step of a single one of the hurrying crowd. But the young coal merchant, as he was passing, paused by the little girl and viewed her with looks of pity.

"Poor little thing!" he muttered; "what

can be the matter with her? Halloo, little one! why are you crying?"

"Ah!" sighed the little girl, looking up, "I am a stranger here, and would like to go to Strasburg to my mother, since I cannot find my uncle."

"You cannot find your uncle?" asked the lad. "Now what is his name? Tell me; I will help you to find him."

"Yes, if I only knew it myself!" exclaimed the little one, and began to cry again. "I forget the name, and mother's letter has dropped out of my pocket."

"Ah, indeed! this is truly very unfortunate," said the young coal dealer, advancing a step nearer to the little girl. "Tell me, then, who you are. What is your name?"

"My name is Madelon, and my mother lives in Strasburg," replied the child. "Oh, if I only had not come to Paris, I would now be sitting with my dear mother!"

“Now come, little Madelon—that is a pretty name; I like it. Now you see what is past cannot be changed, and I suppose your mother has sent you to Paris to pay your uncle a visit?”

“Yes, indeed, you have guessed it!” answered Madelon. “It is just so. Mother wept and said she could no longer care for me, but uncle in Paris would surely take pity on me; and then she wrote a long letter to uncle and gave it to me, weeping all the time; then she sold a gold ring and went with me to the post-house and paid my fare, telling me to be sure and keep the letter carefully; and then she kissed me—oh, so often and with so many tears!—and I kissed mother also and wept until the stage-coach started. When I came, early this morning, to Paris, the letter was gone, and I know not what has become of it. Oh, I wish I had never let it go out of my hand!” The little Madelon

again burst into tears and hid her pretty little face in her hands.

As the lad viewed her with looks of tenderness and pity, his eyes also filled with tears. He sat down beside Madelon, took her upon his knee, and kindly stroked her cheeks.

“Poor child!” he said, with a soft voice. “So small and delicate, and yet compelled to leave your mother. But be quiet, darling; we will find your uncle, even if the letter has been lost. We will write to Strasburg to your mother, and she will write back to us and send us a new letter for your uncle; so be comforted. Meanwhile, you shall stay with me and my mother, and we will love you so dearly that you shall hardly miss your mother. How is it? Will you go with me?”

“Ah, yes, a thousand times!” exclaimed the little Madelon, with a cheerful countenance, and wound her white and tender lit-

tle arm around the boy's neck. "You are really as kind and friendly as if I were your sister."

"You shall indeed be my sister and look upon me as a brother," replied the young coal merchant. "Call me Pierre. That is my name, and my mother's name is Mme. Thierry. And even if we are poor, and have to live sparingly, you shall at least have enough to eat and a bed where you can sleep at night. Poor little one! Motherless and lonely in Paris! Dear me! what might have become of you if I had not found you? Come, my little darling! Have you any baggage at the post-house?"

"Ah, no!" replied Madelon. "I have nothing at all except what I have on me. My dear mother is really so poor that she could not give me more, and in order to make me a little cloak, that I might not freeze on my journey, she cut up her last silk dress.

Oh, my mother is so good! but she is very unhappy. Often have I seen her weep. Even at night, when I happen sometimes to wake, I have heard her mourn and pray to the dear Lord, that he might take me into his holy care and keeping. And you see, dear Pierre, how the prayer of my good mother has already been answered. For the dear Lord has surely sent you to me, and if you had not come, I would likely have had to suffer still more. Oh how glad my mother will be when she learns how kind you have been to me!"

"It is no more than Christian duty," replied Pierre; "and since I know that your mother is not rich, but poor like ourselves, I take you the more readily with me to our family. Do you see, Madelon, the poor must always assist each other, because the rich do not do it, or only seldom, since they do not know the bitterness of poverty? And how should

they? They live always in plenty and pleasure, and cannot know from experience how painful it is when one has scarcely a piece of bread in the house, and often knows not where to get food for the coming day. Yes, they do not know it, and therefore we should not blame them. But come, little Madelon; dinner will probably be ready at home, and I suppose you have not tasted any food to-day."

"No, ah no!" replied the little one. "I have been weeping the whole morning, and never thought of eating. But now I am really hungry."

"So I thought," answered Pierre. "Only have patience a little while. My mother, I know, has made a soup, and I have no doubt it will be sufficient to satisfy all three of us and my Boncœur, the good animal, also. Come, Madelon! Come, little sister!"

Madelon jumped up, and Pierre took off

his jacket and spread it over the coal upon his wagon.

“Why do you do this?” asked the little one.

“That you may ride without soiling your pretty little cloak,” replied Pierre, laughing. “We have yet a long way to our home, and the walking would set very hard on you; so up with you;” and gently placing her upon his coal wagon, he seized the tongue, urged on his Boncœur, and forward they went through the streets of Paris. Madelon laughed joyously upon her seat, and cast many a sweet glance upon her new friend Pierre, who oftener than usual turned his dark but handsome face toward the wagon. It was not, however, the coal that caused him to look back, but the little Madelon, whose sweet temper and confiding affection had won his heart.



CHAPTER II.

MATERNAL LOVE.

THE tempest roared; heavy showers of rain poured from the heavens, and the highway was changed into deep and almost impassable mud. Men and beasts shunned the storm and kept themselves quiet in the house and the yard. Even the birds nestled under the shrubs and hedges, where the last brown leaves of autumn offered them some little protection from the storm. And the highroad which leads from Nancy through Chalons to Paris, usually full of life and bustle, was now deserted and lonely.

A solitary woman was seen passing wearily along this road. Young and delicate, and

poorly clad, she seemed ill fitted to brave the beating rain of the autumnal storm. Her lovely face, so pale with sorrow, and the utter exhaustion that was manifested in every movement, awakened fear that she would soon sink under the hardships to be encountered at every step. Already evening was at hand, and the sun, whose light had been obscured by the storm-cloud, would soon go down, and the next village where she could find shelter was still more than an hour's journey distant.

This lonely traveler was hardly dealt with by the driving winds and drenching rains and miry roads, so that often she would stand still and pant for breath. After a short respite, she again went on her way with a will and a purpose of endurance that are rarely exhibited in the hardiest and most vigorous men. There was something about this lady—something in her delicate and graceful form, in her

expression and bearing, that told at once, notwithstanding her poor apparel, that she was a woman of noble birth. But how came she to this condition of beggarly dress and abandonment? What misfortune has urged her to such exposure of her delicate frame to the merciless storm? Surely such a destiny was never dreamed of at her infant cradle as it rocked in some old castle.

The lady traveled on, pausing and panting; then starting afresh, compelling her reluctant limbs again and again to encounter the rigors of the storm, until she finally sank to her knees upon the ground, and could proceed no farther.

Despairingly she wrung her hands, and as tears rolled down her pallid cheeks, "O God!" she sighed; "I submit; I die! My child! my dear child! shall I never more see you again? Merciful God, have pity upon me! Grant me power; give me strength! I

must see my sweet child once more, to press her, though it be for the last time, to a mother's heart! O my God, have mercy upon me!"

For a short time she remained kneeling upon the highway, her tears mingling with the falling rain and her hair floating in the storm. The poor, unhappy woman, trembling with weakness and cold, with great difficulty rose up again and walked, or rather staggered, on until she reached a solitary tree, when her almost breaking heart found relief in prayer.

"O my God and Saviour, let me see my child again! let me press her once more to my bosom! Oh forgive me for letting the dear little one depart from me! Thou canst look into my heart! Thou knowest how it bled when parting from her, my last and only treasure! that I desire only her happiness, and not mine own! Thou knowest I thought only of her, not of myself! that it was night around and in me when I no longer

beheld the light of her eyes! Oh then help me, thou holy One, full of grace and pity! that I may see her once more before I die!"

Thus prayed the desolate mother with pale and trembling lips, and then, exhausted, she leaned her head against the tree, her eyes closed, her arms feeble and helpless at her side, and a passing observer would scarcely have known whether it was the sleep of life or of death. The last sign of life she gave were these soft and whispered words: "My child! My child! God protect thee!" Then all was still save the wind, that seemed to sigh through the branches, her slumbering song—perhaps, indeed, her requiem. The poor lady who slumbered here was the mother of the little Madelon in whom Pierre, the young coal merchant of Paris, had taken such a kindly interest. This mother had experienced sore trials, and, though young, had tasted the cup of affliction even to the bitter

dregs. Ah, little did she who sang her cradle hymns dream of such a fate for the child! that some future day she should die upon the public highway, in the pitiless storm, forsaken and hopeless; that there ever would come a time when, in her utter desolation, the only comfort left would be the consciousness that by no willful act of hers had this calamity fallen upon her. Her childhood was happy. No cloud obscured the morning of her life. Count Saint Foix, her father, loved her with a tenderness that belongs to an only child. The mother spread both hands protectingly over Marion, the darling, and her early years were environed with all the elegance and pleasure that riches could procure. Then came the reign of terror of the French Revolution, and with it the days of sorrow and suffering for the hitherto happy child. Her parents were dragged to the guillotine—the doom of rank and title—and beheaded, and

she, but for her tender years, would have shared a similar fate.

Poor Marion, at the age of four left alone in the world, without the gentle care of parental love, would have begun at once her after-life of suffering but for the kindly interference of a house-servant. As soon as the good Jeanette, the former nurse of the child, heard of the calamity, she hastened to the palace of her parents. She arrived just in time to take the child under her special care. The palace was already full of bustling sergeants of the court, who were confiscating the property by authority of the rulers of the government, when Jeanette entered it pale and breathless. She called to her the child they were about to cast into the street with heartless unconcern of her tender youth or helplessness. The little Marion flew into the arms of her loving nurse, and, weeping, leaned her head on that faithful heart. Jeanette pressed

her tenderly to her bosom and besought the sergeants to entrust the child to her care. Not only was this granted, but at the suggestion of a noble young officer, she was allowed to take with her the most valuable articles of clothing for the little one. A happy idea flashed through the mind of the good nurse. She knew, from observation in former days, where Count Saint Foix and his wife kept their most valuable jewels. If she could secure these, the little Marion would still be rich, for the jewels were of great value. Taking the child in her arms, she hastened through the many apartments of the palace until she came to the remotest chamber, which the robbers had not yet reached. Here was the chest that contained the jewels. She found it locked, but this did not discourage her. With the help of an axe, which she speedily procured, she forced open the well-secured lid of the chest. Her affection-

ate fondness for the little child seemed to inspire her with the needful strength. Here stood the casket of jewels, and beside it a little box containing important papers. She seized both, hid them in her garments, snatched up a parcel of Marion's clothes, and left the palace without interruption. The child was rescued, and with her at least a part of her rightful possessions. The good Jeanette already deemed her treasures in perfect safety, when, upon her return to her residence, which was in one of the suburbs of Paris, at some distance from the palace, she happened to get into a very large throng of people that had been collected by one of the daily-occurring executions. Before she could turn aside, she beheld herself surrounded by a crowd of ragged, wild-looking men and women. Marion's clothes, which Jeanette carried in her arms, attracted the greedy rabble. They sought to snatch them from her, but Jeanette offered

resistance. Suddenly several frantic fellows seized hold of her and knocked her down; others thronged about her, and her clothes were literally torn into fragments. When she recovered from the swoon into which she had been thrown by the rabble, she looked in vain for little Marion, who it seems had been jostled from her side and lost in the general tumult. Her despairing call for the child died away unanswered. Jeanette, however, felt some comfort in her sorrow when she found that the little box of jewels and the important papers had not been discovered by the ruffians. With grief and tears she carried them to her house, locked them up carefully, and resolved to preserve them for Marion, whom she confidently expected to see again. After the lapse of years with no tidings of the child, she still cherished the hope of her return, and accordingly the little boxes, with their treasures, were sacredly

kept in their old places. Jeanette did not touch them; she did not take the smallest of the sparkling jewels, though she had, in the course of time, not unfrequently to contend with poverty and dire necessity. To her the treasures were as if they were not. They belonged to the little Marion, the child of her former master and mistress, and as soon as Marion returned, she should receive her property safe and undiminished from the hands of her faithful nurse. This was her resolution, which no consideration could change.

But what had meanwhile become of little Marion, when the tumult arose around her nurse? Who protected the child against the violence of the crowd? Again it was a faithful house-servant, who, in the past, had received many favors from the noble Count Saint Foix, and now saw an opportunity of requiting the benefits received by rescuing

the helpless child. He took the child, straying through the streets, to the country, where he had lately rented a small place and married a worthy woman. In a few words he told her how he had found the child, and the good-hearted Ninette readily took her into the house. It is true, the little Marion was deprived here of many things which she had enjoyed in her parental home, but she found at least true hearts who wished her well and did not allow the orphan to feel that she was a stranger in the family of Antoine. She grew fast, to the great delight of her foster-parents, who appeared gradually to forget that Marion was not their own child, until a circumstance occurred which suddenly called the past to their remembrance. A squadron of hussars, who were upon the march to Spain, were to have a day of rest at the village where Antoine resided, and the commanding officer was quartered with him. The

pretty little Marion, who showed no rusticity either in her outward appearance or in her deportment, attracted the officer's attention. He asked whether Marion was their own child, and Antoine told him the facts concerning the little girl. The officer—a young and prepossessing man—manifested deep emotion during the recital, but controlled himself until Antoine had ended. Then rising quickly, he embraced the honest man and said: “Antoine, how can I thank you? Marion is my niece, the daughter of my sister, who was married to Count Saint Foix, and I am Count Louis Narbonne! Marion, dear child, come to my arms; I am your uncle!”

That was a surprise. Antoine knew full well that there were still some relatives of the Countess Saint Foix living, but he neither knew their names nor whether they had escaped the fearful storms of the Revolution.

Dearly as he and his wife loved the little Marion, reluctant as they were to lose the loving, pretty child, the good foster-parents nevertheless agreed to give her up. Count Narbonne insisted that Marion should be taken to Paris and educated according to her rank and station. He owed this to the memory of his dear, unhappy sister and he could care much better for the future welfare of the child than the good Antoine who had to provide for his own family, which had gradually become numerous. Antoine understood this, and the next morning he took Marion to Paris, with a letter which Count Narbonne had written to his wife, to deliver the little one into the hands of her aunt residing there.

Thus Marion returned to Paris and to her relations. The honest Antoine thought that this would be conducive to her happiness, but perhaps it would have been better if she had never left the humble cottage of her foster-

parents. It is true, she found in the house of her aunt an affectionate reception, and neither the Countess Narbonne nor her husband, who a year after returned from Spain, was wanting in every kindly attention of sympathy and affection; but this very affection of her relations became afterward the principal cause of Marion's misery. Count Narbonne was not what might be called wealthy. He desired to ensure her future welfare, and therefore arranged her marriage, while very young, to a collateral relation of his family—the rich Count Brissot—whose character, it seems, he had but partially known. Marion was made very miserable by this marriage. Count Brissot was a rough, dissolute man, who concealed his bad qualities from the world under the mask of hypocrisy, but secretly practiced the most abominable vices. He did not in the least concern himself about his wife and Madelon, his little

daughter. He squandered his riches in dissipation, and turned a deaf ear alike to the tears and entreaties of Marion. He at last defrauded Count Narbonne—his relative, the benefactor of his wife—of a large sum of money, and then fled secretly, with Marion and his child, from Paris to Germany. Marion of course did not know that her husband had become a defaulter, as Count Brissot took good care not to tell her, as he well knew her noble and honorable character. But Count Narbonne was led to regard her as the accomplice of her husband; because, as he reasoned, if innocent, instead of going off with the defrauder, she would certainly have returned to him with her child. Hence he treated her with contempt, and when, one day, he received a letter from Marion, he did not so much as read it, but cast it into the fire without any further notice.

The unhappy Marion had meanwhile fared

miserably. She had scarcely arrived in Germany with her husband before he became involved with an officer in a gambling brawl, which resulted in a duel with pistols. Count Brissot was killed in this encounter, and Marion, with the startling intelligence of his death, learned also that he had lost in gambling, on the previous evening, his entire fortune, and that now she and her child were left in a strange land poor and friendless. It was a heavy affliction for the unfortunate mother; but love for her child—the little Madelon—inspired her with strength and self-reliance to endure what was inevitable, and to rescue at least some fragments from the wreck of her life's happiness. A few rings and other articles of ornament were still in her possession. She turned them into money, repaired with her daughter to Strasbourg, and there wrote to her uncle the letter which, as already stated, he did not read, but

committed at once to the flames. Marion, meanwhile, waited with painful anxiety for an answer, for sympathy and help in her desolate condition. She wrote again, but no answer came. In agony of mind, she wrote the third and fourth time. Finally a sign of life appeared. With a trembling hand she opened the letter, and with a dim eye and an almost breaking heart she read these few lines :

“Ungrateful one, forbear writing to me !
Never will I condescend to read your letters !
You have merited nothing, and can never
expect anything from me, but the deepest
scorn. Every attempt to change this undying
feeling will only sink you the deeper in my
contempt !

NARBONNE.”

Poor Marion ! She had not expected this. She was certainly innocent and unconscious of any sin against her stern and inexorable uncle. How could she be responsible for the fact that her husband had been a bad, detest-

able man? And here too was the little Madelon! Of what had she been guilty—the poor innocent child? Surely the uncle could not justify himself in withdrawing his hand from her—the sweet little girl!

Marion found herself in a deplorable condition. The trifling sum of money which she possessed was daily diminishing; it was not difficult to calculate when the last franc, the last sou, would be paid out, and she was beginning to yield to utter despondency. Then her glance fell upon the little Madelon, her dear child. The pulses of her maternal love throbbed with intense life as she folded Madelon in her arms, pressed her long and tenderly to her bosom, and whispered, with falling tears: “My dear child, you shall never want, though to preserve you I should have to labor day and night!” Maternal love infused new life and energy into her dejected spirits. Marion was proficient in many little female

accomplishments, and she turned everything to this one aim, to support her child. She sewed, embroidered, painted—as she promised—day and night. She allowed herself only a few hours of sleep. At midnight she retired to rest, and the rising sun found her again at her work. By the most untiring industry she earned at least as much as kept her child from want, and beyond this she had but little concern. Thus a year of care and sorrow and sleepless nights passed almost quickly and without complaint from Marion, the faithful mother. But sorer trials awaited that mother in prolonged and disabling sickness. For weeks Marion was unable to work, and the small earnings which she had laid up soon disappeared. She recovered, it is true, but she was poorer than ever, and the anxious care for the future welfare of the child pressed heavily upon her heart. What if she had sunk under the recent illness and died! Who

would have cared for little Madelon? Who would have taken the poor orphan child and preserved her from hunger? And if there should be a return of her sickness, which, from her anxious toils and sleepless nights, was more than likely, it would surely be her last, and what would become of her child? Her maternal heart was haunted with this thought, and trembled at the bare possibility of the future. "O God, the child, the child must be saved from such a terrible calamity!" But how? She thought of her uncle, Count Narbonne, and a glimpse of hope flashed like lightning through her dark and troubled heart. "Yes," she said, "I must separate myself from the sweet little one! I must send her to Paris! I must commit her to the magnanimity of the count! The count only hates and despises me! The innocent child he neither will nor can despise; nor will he disown her, for she is his grand-niece,

his nearest relative. True, it will wellnigh break my heart to be separated from my Madelon, from my sweet, beloved child, from my only comfort; but God's will be done. I will endure all—hunger and sorrow, suffering and privations—if only the little one be no longer exposed to the rough storms of life. Yes, it shall be done! I will bear the separation, and Narbonne will receive her, and Madelon will be happy, and will forget me—me, her mother, who love her more than life! And I—well, I will soon die of grief, and God, for Jesus' sake, will have mercy upon me and take me to himself in his heavenly kingdom! Of what consequence am I, if only it be well with the child?" Thus spoke the faithful mother, in anguish and tears, and true to her words, she never faltered in her purpose. By toil and self-denial she gathered as much money as would pay Madelon's fare in the stage-coach to Paris.

She gave all to her child, and kept nothing for herself save her tender maternal love and the pain of parting. She accompanied Madelon to the post-house, lifted her, with her own trembling hands, into the coach, and then besought the conductor to take a kindly interest in the helpless little traveler. She sent with the child a letter to Count Narbonne. In it she described her misery in most eloquent and touching words. She thought, surely when the count reads this letter he cannot turn Madelon away, unless his heart is turned to stone. And thus Madelon drove away, and it seemed to her mother as if the wheels of the coach rolled over her heart and crushed it. With eyes dimmed by tears, she looked after the coach until it disappeared in the distance. Then, with a heavy heart, she returned to her home; and as she sat in the lonely chamber and thought of her dear little angel, gone and

never to return, she wept aloud and sank upon her knees, and for hours struggled in the deepest agony of grief. She prayed to God, from her inmost heart, that the Father of all mercies would protect her child and bestow his blessings upon her. Only her child! For herself the faithful mother asked nothing but grace to bear her sorrow with meekness and submission. She was willing to bear without a murmur her many afflictions, if only the light of prosperity would shine upon the path of her child. Then everything would be well; then she could die, even if alone and without the comfort of a last look upon her beloved child.

Several days passed away. The poor mother knew that her life was ebbing forth with her tears; yet she repented not of what she had done; she desired not to undo the sacrifice which she had made for her child, though that sacrifice should be nothing less

than her life. But suddenly a happy thought, like a new inspiration of life, made her tearful eyes sparkle with joy. She leaped up, and with hasty steps walked up and down her little chamber; her pale cheek flushed, her mouth smiled again. "O God!" she exclaimed, "this suggestion comes from thee, from thee! Yes, that I will do! I will go to Paris; I will follow my child! Paris is large and wealthy; there also I can work. I will perform the most menial services. If I can only see her, only once a day! ah, only once in a week, and at a distance, at the window; only see, see! I will not press her to my heart, lest I should offend the cruel and capricious uncle; only *see* my dear Madelon, my child; then, with her sweet image in my heart, go to my daily work! God will grant me the strength! The sight only of my child will give me strength! Yes! Away, away to Paris—to her, to my child!"

But the good and loving mother could not, like Madelon, hasten in a coach to Paris, because she had really given everything she had to the child, even her last dress. But this did not deter the mother. She had courage; she could walk—travel the weary miles on foot. She could hunger, thirst and even beg, if need be. Of what concern were all things else to her if she could only see her child! If only at a distance, as one sees the sun, or the stars in the dark night-sky. Under the impulse of this love she went. Yes, she went and forgot the weakness of her recent sickness, from which she had barely recovered, and only thought of her child that she loved so dearly. Oh how she longed for a glance at her clear blue eyes; her rosy little mouth, which could smile so sweetly; her flaxen hair, whose golden curls hung around her head like a sacred halo! On her journey the little Madelon was ever before her, and

she seemed to see nothing but her child. The people, the towns, the villages, the forests, the streams, all glided by her like shadows. Wearily she journeyed on from place to place, and everywhere the people, when they met the soft glances of her beautiful eyes, yielded her prompt and kindly sympathy. Thus she arrived at the place beyond Nancy, where she was overtaken by the storm. For a while her maternal love prevailed against the rain and the tempest; but finally her powers of endurance failed, and she lay exhausted and fainting under the tree on the public road. The shadows of evening were falling, and if no relief should come to the lonely sufferer, the approaching night would prove the end alike of the loving mother and her sufferings.

But heaven had not ordained so tragical an end to the mother's love. There came slowly along the highway a large covered

wagon. Two small horses drew the wagon heavily along the muddy road, and neither the whip nor the call of the driver could hasten their tardy steps. As the wagon approached the lonely tree it suddenly stopped.

"What is the matter now, Florentine?" sounded a loud call out of the wagon, in which various voices were mingled in strange singing, jesting and laughing. "Quiet, children! Florentine, why do you halt in the middle of the public road? It certainly is not such delightful weather that we should regard our journey as a pleasure trip!"

"Ah, Mr. Director," replied the driver, "only please look there at the trunk of the tree! The poor lady appears to be nearly dead, if not dead already!"

"Where, where?" exclaimed voices from the wagon, as ten or twelve heads looked out from under the cover. "Ah, yes; the poor lady! Quick, Florentine, down from the

wagon! Look after her, and if there is still life in her, we must take her along!"

Florentine immediately sprang from his seat and waded through the mud to the tree.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed—"the poor creature, so lightly clad, not a dry stitch on her; but she is still living! How she shivers with cold! Quick, children; bring a little wine!"

A sprightly young girl, careless of the mud, soon came with a flask of wine. "Ah, how pale the poor thing is!" she exclaimed, looking at Marion with pity, "and yet how lovely! Children, we must take her with us. Quick! Make a comfortable seat ready in the wagon, and wrap her in my cloak. Hand me the flask, Florentine. Be careful; you are pouring the wine on her dress! Hand it here, quick!"

"Well, well, Mademoiselle Louise, every one does the best he can," replied the horse-

tamer. "She does not open her mouth, and so the wine has to flow beside it."

"Ah, you do not understand it, simple boy!" said Mademoiselle Louise, rather sharply, and she took the flask from him. She poured several drops into her hand and rubbed it upon the temples of the fainting woman. In a few minutes Marion came to, opened her eyes, and cast a bewildered look about her.

"Be quiet; do not worry yourself, good lady," said Mademoiselle Louise, softly and affectionately. "We will not harm you. There! take a little sip of wine; it will warm and refresh you. So, so! Now you will soon feel better!"

"Yes, yes; I must proceed; I must go farther; I must see my child!" muttered Marion, still half senseless. "I thank you, dear girl, but do let me go; I must go to Paris, to my Madelon!"

“Certainly we will not keep you back,” replied Louise; “but we are going to Chalons, which is on your road, and will give you a place in our wagon. On foot you cannot travel, poor little creature, you are too weak! Come, it is dry in the wagon, and if you wrap yourself in my cloak and lean on me, you will feel better.”

Gradually Marion understood her situation; her dull eyes grew bright, and she tried to raise herself up. Florentine and Louise hastened to her assistance.

“Will you take me with you to Chalons in your wagon, good people?” inquired Marion. “Oh how good and kind you are! How I thank you! Now I shall see my dear child once more! I feared I should never see her again till I met her in heaven. I could go no farther; my limbs failed me, and I sank down and thought I was dying. And now—”

“Now you shall return to life,” interrupted Louise, “and you will, by the help of God, find again the child for whom you long! Come, follow me; it is dry and warm in the wagon, and we will care for you.” She clasped the weak Marion gently in her arms, and, with the assistance of Florentine, Marion was placed in the best seat in the tilt-wagon, and not only Louise, but all the rest of the people in the wagon, tried to revive her exhausted body. Cloak, handkerchiefs, shoes and refreshments were offered to her; Louise warmed her numbed hands with her breath; others wrapped her cold feet in old felt, and Marion—the poor Marion—was happy in receiving the kind attention and sympathy of which she had been so long deprived.

“Who, then, are you, good people?” she said, when she had recovered a little from her exhaustion and felt a new life and warmth in

her chilled limbs. "You are surely angels of heaven, to interest yourself so kindly in me!"

"Pretty angels, indeed!" replied the cheerful Louise, laughing and warmly pressing Marion's hands; "we are strolling show-people, good woman; we intend to hold an exhibition in Chalons, to see whether the people there will be enough pleased to bestow a few francs upon us. But there is little hope of success. Our best performer has left us and gone to Paris. She was so pretty—almost as pretty as you, dear lady—and the people came to our exhibition mostly on her account. Would that she were yet with us, the ungrateful Fleurette! But no; I dare not say so; she is right, because in Paris she earns more money than with us, and since she has to care for a poor mother, one cannot blame her for accepting a better situation. I only desire that the loss which we have sus-

tained by her leaving us may be in some way made up to us. Is it not so, M. Lemaire?"

"Ah, true; true, indeed!" replied M. Lemaire, the director of the little show-company, with an audible sigh. "Fleurette was a jewel to us! But do not be discouraged, Louise. Heaven has helped us in the past, and will not forsake us in the future. You perform tolerably well, and in a few years—well, we shall see!"

"Yes, if I were pretty!" responded Louise, laughing; "but I am only lively, and that is not sufficient. The people always desire to see something attractive in a performer. Well, no matter, Father Lemaire; we must all do our best, and then we shall, it is to be hoped, earn at least a living. But look; yonder already are the lights of the village where we expect to spend the night! Cheer up, poor little lady; you will soon retire to rest, and I will see that you have the very

best bed in the hotel. We are not so very tired, and could, if need be, rest upon a bed of straw; but you, poor little creature, have been exposed all day to the rain and storm. First of all you must be cared for; must she not, Father Lemaire?"

"Certainly, you little tattler," responded the director, in a deep bass voice. "Drive on, Florentine; we will all be glad when we can go to rest."

Florentine urged the horses forward, the wagon rattled into the village, stopped at the hotel, and the company alighted. First Florentine, then Father Lemaire and his wife, then their seven children, ranging in age from twelve to twenty-four years, and finally Louise with Marion. Marion was the first in bed, and Louise, true to her word, arranged that the warmest and softest bed should be given to her, and thus favored, she slept sweetly all night.



CHAPTER III.

THE NEW HOME.

LITTLE Madelon, in Paris, had not the least idea of all that we have narrated in the preceding chapter. She fared very well in the city, as Pierre and his mother—Mme. Thierry—had already become as fond of the little girl, whom a strange providence led to them, as if she had been with them for years. Madelon, however, was herself so gentle and affectionate that she would have gained much harder hearts than theirs. It was not strange that they became fond of the poor, helpless child, who had, as it were, fallen from heaven into Paris. When Pierre came home at night from his wanderings

through the city, he always brought the little Madelon some gift, to procure which he denied himself to surprise the little girl. Mme. Thierry also took such good care of her that she hardly missed her mother. Mme. Thierry often watched the little one with a puzzled air, rubbing her forehead as if she were recalling long-forgotten memories, and then she would mutter to herself: "Wonderful, wonderful! The child reminds me strangely of the past! It seems to me as if I had heard her clear, silvery laugh and seen her sweet smile before; but no, this cannot be! Children all look alike, and this is only fancy;" and then she would again ask the little one the name of her mother, and she would reply, as before: "She is called mother and Mme. Brissot." And she would not say more, as this was all she knew. Pierre, on the day after he had brought Madelon to his mother's, had written to Strasburg to Mme. Brissot, to

give the mother of the child some intelligence of her fate, and to ask her for another letter addressed to the uncle of the little one. But he of course received no answer, since, as we know, Madelon's mother, after the departure of the little one, had herself left Strasburg for Paris. Pierre waited many days for a letter, but day after day passed by and nothing was heard of Madelon's mother.

"That is a bad sign," said Pierre, one day, to Mme. Thierry, while Madelon was out playing in the street. "If only no misfortune has befallen the poor lady! Perhaps she may have died of grief, as, judging from all Madelon has told us, she must have loved her child dearly."

"She certainly did that," replied Mme. Thierry; "but we must not fear the worst. The poor lady may be only sick, or our letter may have been lost or come into other hands, as there may be more than one Madame

Brissot. In short, there may be many causes of her silence besides that of death. In his own time, God will solve the mystery."

"Yes, dear mother," replied Pierre, with a sorrowful countenance, "that would all be well enough; but only think! if we should receive no intelligence, we cannot take Madelon to her uncle."

"Well, yes, and what more?" asked Mme. Thierry.

"What more, mother? Well, you know very well that the coal trade will soon decline, as nearly all the people have laid in their supply for the winter, and then there will be scanty fare, and the winter is coming, in which we use more money than in summer; and what will then become of Madelon, mother?"

"Well, what will become of her?" replied Mme. Thierry. "*What will become of her?* Here she shall remain with us, and share

with us what we have—that is certain, foolish boy!”

“But when we have nothing more to share, dear mother?” asked Pierre. “You know last winter it once happened that there was no bread in the house.”

“Yes,” said Mme. Thierry; “what are you going to prove by that, my son? Did not God help us at that time, and provide a situation in M. Bedos’ factory?”

“Exactly so; but I went to the factory yesterday to see if I could obtain my old position, and I was told that M. Bedos had sold the factory, and that the new owner had hands in abundance. Yes, mother, heaven has helped us in the past, but we must not be too confident of the future.”

“Nonsense, my son! Heaven always helps honest people. If you find no work there, you will find it somewhere else!” re-

plied Mme. Thierry. "You must not cross me, boy. Madelon shall remain with us, and share with us prosperity and adversity. You surely do not intend to cast her upon the street?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Pierre; and, clapping his hands, he continued: "You see, mother, I only wanted to hear your opinion and what you thought of the matter. I am glad that your views are the same as mine, and that Madelon is no less dear to you than to me. Nor is my anxiety as great as I pretend. While God preserves my life and health, I can work, and whoever wants work can find it. It is true, if I was taken sick things would look badly; but then— Well, mother, the casket with the jewels stands idly in the cupboard, and you know in case of necessity there remains this last resource, to sell some of the precious stones; and if the owner should appear, which I do not fear, she will

not blame us for using in extreme necessity extreme measures."

"That is folly, my son," said the mother, quietly and decisively, after long thought. "You well know that I would rather cut off my hand than take the smallest jewel out of the casket. It is not that which makes me thoughtful; but when I recall the picture of the little Marion, as she was when the cruel people butchered her father and mother, and I saved her with much difficulty from the palace, the little Madelon seems to look exactly like her. But it cannot be possible! Marion would certainly have remembered me. She knew that I rescued the jewels, but then she was so small that she knew not the value of the casket, and took no notice of it. But perhaps she is still living, and Heaven may some time lead her to the arms of her faithful nurse, Jeanette, as the sweet child used to call me. If Madelon should really be

Marion's daughter, then the use of the treasure would be justifiable. But how can that be possible? Marion had black curls and brown eyes; Madelon has flaxen curls and blue eyes. But why trouble myself with these foolish fancies? No one knows who Madelon's mother is! I will never think of it again!"

"Time will show a way, mother," said Pierre. "Whoever Madelon may be, we will both love her as if she were my sister; will we not, dear mother?"

"Indeed we will!" replied Mme. Thierry. "Whoever is her mother, she is a dear, good child, whom God himself has sent to us, that we may take care of her!"

Thus it was settled that Madelon should be just as a child of their family, and she really did share the love of a child. Quietly and contentedly the little family lived together, until an event occurred that suddenly

brought great distress upon Pierre and his mother.

One day Pierre came home with his coal wagon earlier than usual, and entered the little house with a happy countenance. His eyes sparkled with joy, and, holding up his closed hand, he called out in a clear voice: "Now guess what I hold here for Madelon!"

"A letter from Strasburg?" asked Mme. Thierry.

"No; alas, no!" responded Pierre; "my treasure is not quite so great; but it will be a pleasure to Madelon, nevertheless! Guess, only guess!"

Madelon and his mother tried again and again, but could not guess it.

"Well, then, I will show it to you!" exclaimed Pierre, and opening his hand, he let fall two tickets for the exhibition. "Here, Madelon," he added; "you have always wished to see 'the splendid feats of horseman-

ship,' and now I can gratify you. Come, get ready, my darling; to-day you shall behold wonders!"

Madelon danced around the room with joy; but his mother, threatening Pierre with her finger, said: "My son, my son, what a thoughtless extravagance! we could have spent the money for the tickets to a better advantage!"

'Why, yes, dear mother, if they had really cost money," replied Pierre; "but a gentleman for whom I did a little errand presented them to me. They wanted a letter carried quickly, and as the carrier was absent, I offered to take it if they would trust me. Then they gave it to me and told me to bring back an answer, and when I returned to the ticket-office the gentleman gave me these two admission tickets, upon condition that I would not sell them. Well, that I promised readily, as I thought instantly of our little

Madelon, and what a pleasure it would be to her if she could see the show, and now I am ready to take her. You will let me, dear mother, won't you?"

"I shall have to," responded Mme. Thierry, "as I cannot think of depriving the child of the pleasure. But take good care of Madelon, Pierre, and return home immediately after the close of the show."

"Yes, mother," said Pierre. "Come now, Madelon; put on your little cloak, as it is cold, and take my hand. Good-bye, mother!"

Mme. Thierry wished her children much pleasure, and joyfully they hastened away. Madelon leaped with delight, and asked Pierre many questions about the horsemanship which they were going to see, and Pierre answered her as well as he could. But he himself had not seen the horsemen, except upon the street when they rode through the town, and therefore could tell her but little

about it. At last they arrived at the place, and got two capital seats, where they could see everything perfectly. There they sat, with beating hearts, waiting for the show to begin, and although they waited nearly an hour, Madelon did not become impatient. There was, indeed, so much to be seen and admired—the splendid building, with its large chandeliers, that sparkled with a hundred lamps; the multitude of spectators; the finely-dressed ladies and gentlemen; the servants in livery, who went to and fro to put everything in order, and many other sights which neither Madelon nor Pierre had ever seen before. They whispered to each other, calling each other's attention to everything that was novel, and constantly finding something new to excite their wonder. Thus the time passed quickly away, until at last a “splendidly-dressed” man entered the house and announced the beginning of the exhibi-

tion. Suddenly there rushed in through the open door forty horses, their riders "glittering with gold and precious stones, and with splendid plumes waving in their hats," at which Madelon clapped her hands with joy and shouted at their "splendor," which she had never before imagined. Madelon was beside herself with excitement, so that she forgot everything but the "splendid" performance. Her joy was so great that many people looked at her and smiled. Madelon did not mind it, but again clapped her hands, uttering one exclamation after another, and finally, to see better, she stood up on the bench where every one could see her. Her pretty form and lively face, beaming with delight, attracted attention, and even the equestrians noticed her. They admired the pretty child, and when a part of the exhibition closed, the ladies near her gave her bon-bons and other good things, which Madelon liked very much

and rewarded with her prattle. Suddenly a man approached Pierre—who always held the hand of Madelon, for fear that she might be lost—and asked him to come with him a moment. Pierre was at once willing, but did not like to leave Madelon. However, an old lady beside him promised to take care of her during his absence. Pierre then followed the strange gentleman, who took him to the director of the exhibition.

“My son,” he asked, kindly, “is that little girl your sister?”

“No,” answered Pierre, who then related, in a few words, how he had found Madelon and taken her to his home.

The director, after listening attentively to him, said: “I will make a proposition to you, my son. The little one perhaps will be a burden to you and your mother, if you are very poor; give her, therefore, to me, and I will see that she becomes a skillful rider.

You are freed then from care, and Madelon—that, I believe, is her name—will have a bright future before her. What do you say to it, my son?”

“No, dear sir,” replied Pierre, “that I cannot do, especially as I have not my mother’s consent. And then we love Madelon so dearly it would be hard for us to part with her; and besides, she is not our own child. If her mother should come and demand the child of us, then what could we say? No, it cannot be, dear sir!”

“Pshaw! you must think better of it, my boy,” replied the director. “Talk to your mother about it, and I tell you I will give you a thousand francs if you entrust the little one to me. A thousand francs! Think of it; that is a large sum; and then you will not lose the little one entirely. You can see her every day and talk to her, as she will remain in Paris. And if her mother returns, which I

do not fear, then leave the matter to me; I will manage it. A thousand francs, my son! Tell that to your mother, and bring an answer to-morrow. Consider what to do; such a fortune does not offer itself every day!"

"Yes, if Madelon herself wishes it," replied Pierre, reflecting; "and if she remains in Paris, and the thousand francs are kept for her, then, indeed, the matter might be thought of. Well, I will at any rate talk to her and my mother."

"But the thousand francs shall be yours," said the director. "Do you not understand me? I will give them to you. The little one does not need them."

"A thousand francs to me!" replied Pierre, disdainfully. "Sir, do you think that we would sell the little one? If we give her to you, we do it in the hope of making her happy, and not from motives of self-interest. You must not talk in that way, sir!"

Suddenly, before the director could answer, there arose a tumult in the circus. A cry of terror was heard on all sides, and some of the spectators rushed headlong over the barriers into the ring. A horse, taking fright at some object, had leaped from the main track and hurled its rider—a pretty young girl—out of the saddle against the planks. She lay senseless and bleeding on the ground, and many, urged by sympathy, hastened to render her some assistance, and to catch the horse running about wildly. The confusion lasted several minutes. The director left Pierre, telling him to return to-morrow. Pierre hastened back to his seat, in order to care for the little Madelon, lest she should sustain some injury in the tumult. As fast as he could, he pushed through the crowd of excited spectators, and arrived finally at his seat. But, to his terror, he could see nothing of Madelon. The little one had disappeared, and with her

the lady to whom Pierre had entrusted her. He inquired after Madelon, but no one could tell him anything of her; no one had noticed the child during the sudden tumult. Pierre called her by name, hastening hither and thither, and pressed through the crowd to the director to tell him of his loss and call upon him for aid. The large room was thoroughly searched; the director himself, after silence had been restored, calling Madelon, asking if the little one had taken another seat, or had been crowded out by the tumult; but there was no answer. Madelon, it seems, disappeared without leaving any trace behind. Finally it was found that, during the confusion, a well-dressed lady had left the circus with a weeping child. No one had opposed her departure, since it seemed natural for the lady to escape the tumult. But who the lady was no one knew.

“The child is doubtless stolen,” said the

director to the weeping Pierre. "It is not the first time that such things have been done. But be comforted, my son. We will do everything possible to find Madelon again, and, with the help of the police, we shall no doubt succeed. Be composed. The child could not disappear without leaving some vestige by which she may be found, and after a few weeks—perhaps days—you will see her again."

Pierre, it is true, became somewhat calmed by this advice of the director; but his enjoyment of the show, and of the other "splendors" of the exhibition, was spoilt. He left the place, and with a sorrowful heart went home to his mother. He wept bitterly, for he loved Madelon dearly, and repented himself that he had left her alone, even for a moment. Sobbing, he told his terrified mother the misfortune that had happened, and Mme. Thierry had great difficulty in consoling the poor

boy, who reproached himself most bitterly. The hope which his mother entertained, that Madelon would soon be found again, and that everywhere she would be under God's protecting care, at length softened Pierre's sorrow. When he went to bed he wet his pillow with his tears, as he still doubted whether he should ever see again the lovely eyes of the little Madelon, and anxiety about her fate pressed upon his heart like a heavy weight. His entertainment had cost him dearly; and he had good reason to regret heartily that he "had seen the show."





CHAPTER IV.

THE PERFORMERS.

DURING the disappearance of Madelon, Marion, her mother, remained with Monsieur Lemaire, who had interested himself in her with the spirit of Christian kindness. The exhaustion which followed the great exertion of Marion brought on a relapse of her former sickness, which, humanly speaking, would have been fatal but for the faithful nursing and sleepless care of the kind-hearted Louise. During the four weeks Marion lay in Chalons in a state of unconsciousness, Louise sat by her bedside, gave her the prescribed medicines and the needful refreshment, and only left her when she had to go

out upon some pressing call of duty. At last, after many a long and sleepless night of anxiety, with returning consciousness Marion opened her eyes and looked about her room in bewilderment. She found herself in a small chamber, poorly furnished, and everywhere the signs of poverty. The bed upon which she lay, a small, rickety table, with medicine bottles and a pewter spoon, an old arm-chair, and a wardrobe without a door, made up all the furniture of that humble room—no curtain in the only window, no mirror on the wall, not a single ornament to give the little room a cheerful appearance. Marion looked and wondered; a young girl was sleeping in the arm-chair; she looked pale and careworn, and on every feature of her gentle face were the lines of weariness and suffering. Marion, herself so afflicted and unhappy, felt at once the most heartfelt sympathy for the sleeping girl.

“Alas, alas!” she muttered, “where am I? And how is it that I am in this strange bed, in this strange room? And who is that girl there? she seems no stranger to me. I have seen her before; but where, where? Have I lost my memory? And oh, where is Madelon, where is my child? I recollect! she is in Paris, and—and I was on my way, and then came the storm and the rain, and I could get no farther. And then, yes, then—ah, yes! now I recollect all—and then came that young girl there, and interested herself in me, and wrapped me in her own cloak, that I might not freeze, and what became of me after that I have entirely forgotten! But that girl—what is her name? Ah, Louise! Yes, Louise! Louise, my child!”

Louise started up quickly from the chair on which she had been sleeping so soundly when Marion called her name, and a ray of light seemed to illumine her pale and sorrow-

ful countenance when she saw Marion sitting up in bed.

“Ah, good lady!” she exclaimed, warmly, pressing Marion’s hands, “you have at last recovered yourself. What a pleasure for me, for us all. Say, say, do you feel better? Do you feel well, dear lady?”

“Entirely well, only a little exhausted and confused,” replied Marion. “But where am I, Louise? Who brought me here? Have I been sick long?”

“Yes, dear lady, quite a long time,” said Louise; “four weeks you seemed to be trembling between life and death. Do you not remember? In the village where we lodged the first night after our meeting each other you became very sick. Well, the landlord was a cruel man, and would not keep you in his house unless we would leave with him a large amount of money for your maintenance. And then Father Lemaire said, ‘Children, we

dare not forsake the poor lady, for she will certainly die unless carefully nursed.' And I answered, 'Yes, we must take her with us, and I will be her nurse, and will care for the poor lady as for a sister; and all the seven children of Father Lemaire united with me in this offer, and Florentine also. Well, we carried you to the wagon, and wrapped you up as warmly as we could, and then we journeyed to Chalons. And here we are still in Chalons. I made you a bed in my little room because Father Lemaire has no room in his house, and besides, with so many children, it would have been too noisy for you: and then I nursed you, and the children of Father Lemaire helped me faithfully, and so, God be praised! you have finally recovered. And it will be a joy to all the rest to hear of your recovery. You must know we all love and sympathize with you because you love your little Madelon so much. All the time of your

sickness, when you were unconscious of what was going on about you, you spoke of nothing but your little Madelon, and at times you would weep and lament and wring your hands so that it almost broke my heart to see you. And then I could not comfort you, as you did not seem to understand a word that was spoken. But only be quiet, and all will turn out well, and the Lord who has restored you to health will restore you to your beloved child. Yes, only believe; God always helps when our need is greatest."

Louise then folded her hands in silence. Marion, looking at her tenderly and lovingly for some time, at last said: "You dear, good child, how much you have done for me! You gave up your own bed to me, a poor, strange woman, and had nothing for yourself all this time but an arm-chair. But tell me, why do you not have a second bed?"

"Well, if you have not heard it, you cer-

tainly must see we are not in prosperous circumstances," replied Louise, laughing through her tears. "Father Lemaire is very unsuccessful in his business, and therefore we have to economize. We cannot afford a second bed, and I was thankful to the landlord for this old arm-chair. But let us only have patience, and affairs may be better in the future. Yes, if only Fleurette were here. You ought to have seen how the people rushed to our exhibition when she was with us, but things are now in a bad way, and I fear Father Lemaire will have to sell his horses and everything in order to procure bread for his children."

"And yet you have interested yourself so kindly in me!" exclaimed Marion, deeply affected. "Why am I not rich, to compensate so much love? Ah, if my uncle knew or could see all this unselfish pity, perhaps his hard heart would be touched! Oh, Louise,

good child, how it pains me to think I have proved such a burden to you!"

"Hush! you must not speak of that; we have done everything heartily, and we only regret that we could not nurse you better!" exclaimed Louise as she wiped the tears from her eyes. "But we will take courage; the Lord sometimes sends prosperity in very unexpected ways, and if we should be thus favored, how gladly we would share it with you! You must not weep, good lady! It might be injurious to you and bring on your sickness again."

"Let me weep, dear, good, friendly child!" replied Marion. "They are not tears of sorrow, but sweet tears of gratitude for your kindness and love. Yes, Louise, I am confident that the Lord will not forsake you, for Jesus says: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Yes, the Saviour

will remember you ; so I feel in my heart, and I know the Lord will bless you for your kindness to a stranger in distress !” Marion spoke these words with cheeks suffused with feeling and her eyes devoutly lifted to heaven.

Louise involuntarily exclaimed : “ Marion, how beautiful you are ! more beautiful than even Fleurette herself !”

“ How ? Fleurette did you say ?” answered Marion, a sudden thought flashing through her mind, and speaking to herself, she continued, in an undertone : “ If I were as pretty as Fleurette, perhaps—but no—and yet an attempt would do no harm ! I will consider it !”

“ What are you thinking about, Marion ?” asked Louise, somewhat surprised. “ You mutter such strange words to yourself, and at the same time you laugh so sweetly and look so lovely. Will you tell me your pleasant thoughts ?”

"You shall know, Louise," replied Marion. "But give me time; the thought is not yet matured, and perhaps it is not worth anything. But tell me something about Fleurette. Was she really so beautiful, and did she play as well as you represent?"

"Certainly," replied Louise; "the others are nothing compared with her. Yes, Fleurette, when she performed, and spoke as if the words dropped like pearls from her lips, all were carried away with the admiration. It seemed as if the applause and the shouting of 'Well done!' would never end. Ah, what are we compared with Fleurette?"

"Have you still the pieces in which Fleurette took a part?" asked Marion. "I should like very much to read something of what she played."

"That you can, good lady! Yes, everything is still here. The dresses she presented to Father Lemaire when she went to Paris, as

she had to make use of something better there. And then she was so good-hearted that she thought the clothes and other articles might at some time or other be of service to Father Lemaire. But of what use are all the clothes and bonnets and feathers, if Fleurette is no longer in them?"

"Could you not find another Fleurette, good Louise?" asked Marion.

"Why yes, but not soon," replied Louise, sadly shaking her head. "What do you think; so pretty and so talented! I can tell you, Marion, although I am accustomed to these things, the tears have at times stood in my eyes when Fleurette played her part; there was something so simple and touching in her manner. There are few could take her place, and Father Lemaire may wait a long time before he can find another Fleurette."

"Well, we will see," said Marion, half to herself and half to Louise. "Fortune often

comes to us when we least expect it, as you said a short while ago. Please, Louise, bring me the books and tell me which parts Fleur-ette played best, and I will pass my time in looking over them."

"Yes, you shall have everything, Marion," replied Louise. "Father Lemaire will gladly favor you, and I will get them for you to-day." Louise kept her word; before noon she brought a bundle of books, and at the same time Father Lemaire and his whole family came to rejoice with Marion in her recovery. Marion thanked all most heartily; but the good people took little notice of her thanks, as what they had done was so natural that they considered it not worth talking about. They remained with Marion until evening, and then left her because they had to go to their calling. Louise also went with them, and Marion wished, as they went, that they might have a successful night.

“It is greatly needed,” replied Father Le-maire, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders; “but I fear it will be like every other evening—nothing but empty seats in the audience-room. If the expenses are met, I will be satisfied.”

When they were gone Marion took up a book, and was absorbed in reading and reflection until Louise returned. She then laid it down, and asked how they had succeeded.

“Badly, as usual,” replied Louise, rather low-spirited. “Fleurette is wanted by us everywhere.”

Marion made no reply, and, fully occupied with her own reflections, she said very little during the evening. Louise, who was busied with her own gloomy thoughts, scarcely noticed the quiet and changed demeanor of her guest. Finally both went to rest. Marion reposed in the comfortable bed, whilst Louise, wrapping herself in her cloak, nestled herself,

as usual, in her arm-chair. Uncomfortable as was her hard and narrow resting-place, she nevertheless soon forgot all her sorrows in a sound and refreshing sleep. But Marion was sleepless, and for a long time disturbed by strange and excited thoughts.

It was noted how constantly Marion studied the books put into her hands by Father Lemaire; Louise had to mark all the parts which Fleurette had played in former times, and these sections Marion read over and over, perhaps as often as forty times. Meanwhile, her shattered constitution was repaired, and her pale cheeks bloomed as the rose, her eyes sparkled with fire that seemed to be kindled in her heart, and she was soon able to leave the room. This occurred just at the time Father Lemaire, whose income was still short, seriously thought of selling his horses and wagon to obtain bread for his family. With a sad countenance he informed his family, in

the presence of Marion, of his resolution. Silence followed this unexpected and depressing intelligence, when Marion kindly persuaded him from this intention; she said: "You ought not, Father Lemaire, to be hasty in this matter; how can you take your baggage and family from town to town without your horses and wagon?"

"We will have to travel on foot," answered Father Lemaire, with a shrug of his shoulders; "and as to the baggage, if things continue on as they have been of late, we will not have much to carry. One article after another will have to be sold."

"Perhaps this may yet be averted," said Marion; "you may yet get fuller houses."

"Of that there is very little prospect," sighed Father Lemaire. "Yes, if Fleurette were here or could be replaced."

"Well, then," said Marion, "you have interested yourself in me as in a sister, and I

consider it my duty to repay your friendly services as far as lies in my power. Father Lemaire, let me make a trial, let me appear and take the part of Fleurette. During my sickness I have memorized several parts, and probably I shall have the fortune to play them to the satisfaction of the spectators."

"What!" exclaimed Father Lemaire, Louise and the rest, in surprise; "Marion, could you do that? You, of so noble rank, you take part in the show! That cannot be."

"And why not?" replied Marion; "my rich relations have cast me off, whilst you, with great self-denial, have taken me up. And then I am not going to appear in my own name and as the Countess Brissot. Call me Fleurette or whatever you please. I am not only willing to do this, but anxious, for I feel it my duty to lighten the burden I have placed upon you. Make a trial of me, Father Lemaire. If the trial is successful, what a satis-

faction to me! if unsuccessful, there will be nothing lost, and I will have the consciousness of an honest effort to serve you."

"Father Lemaire, Marion is right," exclaimed Louise, whilst all the rest were silent; "she is right, and I would certainly act in the same way if I were in her situation. And do you know what I think? I believe Marion will have even greater success than Fleurette, because she is prettier, and you should only hear her read once, Father Lemaire. Look into that beautiful face and hear that silvery, mellifluous tone; only yesterday she made the tears come when she read a touching scene to me. Only hear her, Father Lemaire, and then judge for yourself of the success with which she will probably meet."

"But, then, will she not be ashamed at some future time of having been engaged in a common exhibition?" said Father Lemaire.

"No, I will never be ashamed of having been thankful," exclaimed Marion. "Give me a trial, Father Lemaire. Determine upon a part in which I can appear, and you may rest assured that I will do my best. Do not hesitate. You, at least, can receive no injury from the trial."

"Well, I am willing you should try," said Father Lemaire. "Come, good Marion, read something for me."

"I need no book, I know it all by heart," replied Marion, and recited at once that part which had so affected Louise the day before. Astonished, Father Lemaire and the others listened to the recitation. Marion performed her part so admirably that when she ended Father Lemaire jumped up in ecstasy and exclaimed,

"Now I myself believe it will not be necessary to sell our bay horses. Dear Marion, Fleurette is a mere beginner com-

pared with you! Florentine, quickly to the printing-office; we must have new advertisements in large letters. ‘Mme.—well, what shall it be?—yes, Mme. Chlorinde from Paris, a stranger! right, Marion, Mme. Chlorinde shall be your name, *of Paris*—that will draw the people, and if you play as well as you have just now recited we shall live to see wonders. Florentine, hasten to the office as fast as possible. I have renewed hope, children, and breathe freely again. Dear Marion, you will prove a deliverer to us all.”

“Heaven grant it!” replied Marion, heartily; “it would be the greatest pleasure to me if I could become a blessing to you.”

Florentine now hastened to the printing-office, whilst Father Lemaire was bustling about getting ready for the exhibition, and his oldest sons were busy spreading through the city the news that Mme. Chlorinde of Paris would give an exhibition to-morrow

evening. The advertisements with the large letters were posted at all corners of the streets. The citizens of Chalons became inquisitive, and every one had something to say about Chlorinde. Some even went so far as to say they had seen Mme. Chlorinde in Paris, and that she was a wonderful woman ; in short, by evening Mme. Chlorinde was on every tongue, and Father Lemaire once more looked bright and cheerful.

When the ticket-office was opened the next day, Father Lemaire might have employed twenty hands, there was such a rush to obtain tickets. Long before the performance began the house was jammed. When Marion beheld the immense concourse of people she almost despaired of success ; but the thought that she was prompted to take this step, not from self-interest or vanity, but from gratitude to her benefactor, inspired her with renewed courage. Louise came to her at that moment,

with a face beaming with delight, and told her how happy Father Lemaire was, in view of the large audience. The rest of the family came also and pressed her hands and almost wept for joy, whilst Louise said: "Courage, dear Marion, for you cannot fail of success." With this encouragement, Marion regained her self-possession, and waited with but little anxiety her time to appear before the anxious crowd. At last the time came. The house was filled to its utmost capacity, and the curious multitude could no longer be kept quiet. Marion's heart throbbed as the curtain rose; she stepped upon the stage with the sea of upturned faces before her. At first all about her seemed veiled in a mist, and, with a feeling of faintness, her memory utterly failed, so that she could not recall the first words of her part. Father Lemaire had anticipated this, and from the prompter's box whispered to her distinctly the forgotten

words. Marion began to speak, and as she proceeded the veil dropped from her memory, and the tones of her full and beautiful voice fell like the sweetest music upon the ears of the listening multitude. She became so absorbed in her performance that she no longer thought of the people. All hearts were borne along on the current of her own feelings, and when the curtain fell, at the close of the first act, there was one burst of applause over the whole house, and it seemed as if the clapping of hands and the "well done" would never cease.

Marion—the good Marion—saw and heard nothing of all this. She only saw the happy faces of Father Lemaire and his family. She only heard the words of gratitude from the lips of her friends. Louise flung herself upon her neck with tears of joy, and exclaimed :

"Do you see, Father Lemaire, that I was right when I said that Marion would prove

herself superior even to Fleurette? Dear Marion, how happy you make us!"

"Heaven be praised for this hour of success!" replied Marion, smiling. "You know not how happy I feel that I can compensate you in some way for your acts of goodness to me! But hark! the bell rings again and the curtain is being raised!"

Every one hastened to his post, and when Marion again appeared she was received with a perfect storm of applause. She recognized it with a modest courtesy, and then proceeded with her part without the least trace of her first embarrassment. She won all hearts, and when the piece was concluded, the whole house seemed to tremble with the thundering applause of the excited and jubilant multitude. Father Lemaire was the happiest of men, for Marion had delivered him out of great distress and perplexity.

Yes, by her excellent performance, Marion

had changed the fortune of Father Lemaire. After the first appearance in the exhibition which met with such splendid success, she continued to perform, and Father Lemaire had to raise the admission fee, to counteract, in some measure, the rush of spectators. After Marion had discharged her debt of gratitude, she felt afresh the longing after her child—the little Madelon—and determined to go to Paris.

“Far be it from me to prevent you from going, dear Marion,” replied Father Lemaire. “I know full well that the longing for your child must be stronger than your friendship for us. But, Marion, after you have found your child again, could you not return with it to us? As long as you are with us we shall not want, and with what joy we will welcome you! We will carry you and your little Madelon on our hands! Yes, Marion, go; but come back again to our open arms!”

“No, Father Lemaire, no; that cannot be!” replied Marion, with quiet determination. “The welfare of my child is of far greater importance to me than my own happiness. In the house of my uncle will my Madelon find such a home as I cannot expect elsewhere, and least of all in a wandering and purposeless life such as yours, Father Lemaire. And then, perhaps, when my uncle ascertains my deep and unquenchable love for my child, when he learns that I suffer everything for my child, perhaps he will have compassion on me; perhaps the ice that has gathered about his heart will melt, and he will allow me a place in his house; if not for my sake, for the sake of my child that so much needs the tender care of a mother. And if that should happen, then I should be the happiest mother under the sun. If I could every day, every hour, see my child, speak to her, press her to my heart, I would gladly perform the

most menial services. Offer me all the treasures of the world without my child, and with her only a crust of bread, and my decision in favor of the latter would take but a moment! We must separate, Father Lemaire. Louise, my dear friend! I will remember you all, and often think of you with love. I seize the pilgrim's staff and travel on, and God guide my steps so that I may find my child—my sweet, lovely, darling Madelon!"

All wept. Even Father Lemaire, unused to weep, was overcome with emotion, and his eyes were suffused with tears.

"Go, child," he said to Marion, and, as if in benediction, laid his hands upon her head—"go, and God's care be with thee! Like a saving angel you came among us, and, in return for our little favors, you have rescued us all from the abyss of ruin. Never shall we forget it! I am now free from care and with sufficient means. I shall probably find a

second Fleurette, if not a second Madame Chlorinde! And now take this, dear—for ever dear—Marion! It is your share of our income, and you must accept it for the sake of your child!”

Marion's resistance availed nothing, and she had to accept the offering of Father Lemaire. Provided with several hundred francs, she finally took leave of her friends, embraced the good, faithful Louise for the last time, and then, with the warm longing for the child in her heart, hastened by coach to Paris. When she reached the city her heart beat with joy in the new prospect of meeting her child. Ah, little did she know the bitter disappointment that awaited her, and how soon the bright hope of her maternal heart would go out in darkness!



CHAPTER V.

NEW TRIALS.

MARION hastened through the busy streets of Paris to the house of her uncle, Count Narbonne, which was still dear to memory. Her heart throbbed as she gazed at a distance and saw the green window-shutters by which it was distinguished from the other houses of that neighborhood. "Ah, under yonder roof is my darling child, from whom I have been so long and painfully separated!" The tumult of her emotions overcame her, the blood rushed to her heart, and for a moment she stood and panted for breath. As soon as she recovered from the temporary exhaustion, and covering her face

with her veil, so as not to be recognized by her uncle or his wife, who might be standing at the window with Madelon, she went on, or rather flew, for love has wings. And now she stood before the house whose walls she believed enclosed the whole of her life's happiness; her eyes glanced from window to window; but, alas! the windows were all empty and not a human being could be seen.

"Simpleton that I am!" whispered Marion; "how could I expect to see her at the very first moment? She is perhaps playing upon the carpet, or prattling her sweet childish talk to her aunt, or it may be her uncle is dandling her upon his knee, and enjoying the ring of her clear, silvery voice. Be patient, and she will certainly come to the window some time or other, and I will gladly wait an hour, a day, or far in the night, if I can only get a glimpse of the dear, sweet, angelic figure!

Yes, patience, restless heart; your longing will yet be gratified!"

Marion lingered, walked up and down the street before the house, and every time she passed she looked from window to window, and gazed anxiously up to the crimson curtains: but nothing could be seen or heard; there was a painful, almost ominous, silence about the house.

Marion, although impressed with the grave-like stillness of the place, had no foreboding of evil. Her uncle and aunt had always lived a very quiet and retired life, and kept very few servants. After walking up and down the street for a long time, at last she sat down exhausted upon the steps of a staircase opposite, still keeping her eye upon every window and door; but no signs of life were visible, and the shadows of night coming on would put an end to these anxious vigils. Marion's loving heart was gradually becoming dark

and gloomy as the night, and weary of the ceaseless watching, she wrapped her veil about her face and wept in silence.

But somehow there must be an end of this, for the poor mother could not pass the night upon the street. Rising from her seat, and casting another and the last look at the house, she wondered why all was so dark and gloomy, with no light in the windows or anywhere. This was strange, because at other times there was always a light in the two windows of the room on the first story occupied by the Countess Narbonne. An anxious foreboding filled Marion's heart as she thought that possibly Count Narbonne had sold his house, or perhaps had removed to his country-seat.

"I will not, I cannot, endure this horrible suspense any longer," she muttered to herself, "and there can be no harm in seeking admission into the house. No one

will recognize me with this veil ; at all events, I will venture it."

Hastily and resolutely she approached the house and pulled the bell. Its clear, sharp tones, as they rang out upon the still night air, startled her. For some time she anxiously waited an answer ; but all was silent. She rang again and again, and finally gave the bell a desperate pull. Presently she heard the sound of footsteps in the hall, and then a voice : "Who pulls the bell so violently at this late hour of the night ? Who is there ?"

"Martin, old Martin, open !" replied Marion, with a trembling voice—"only one moment ! Open !"

"Pshaw ! it is only a woman, and she knows me !" Marion heard the old servant say, whom she recognized by his voice ; and immediately after the door was opened.

An old man stood in the hall, with a candle, and looked with inquisitive wonder at

Marion, who rushed into the house, and, trembling with excitement, seized the old man's hand and exclaimed: "Where is *she*, Martin? Where is Count Narbonne?"

"And what do you want with him, madame?" inquired the old man, who could not recognize the features of the strange lady through her veil. The count has gone on a journey with his wife to Italy, and will not return for several weeks."

"On a journey! Ah, I expected that!" muttered Marion. "But the child, Martin, the child? Did they take her with them?"

"The child?" asked the old man, in astonishment. "What child? His grace, my lord, has no child!"

"No child?" exclaimed Marion, greatly excited. "Martin, good Martin, try to recollect! I know very well that your lord has no children of his own! But that little girl who a few months ago came into this house?"

The little Madelon, Martin? Where is she? where is she? Oh have mercy, good Martin, and conceal nothing from me!"

"A child? Madelon?" said the old man, in amazement. "Dear lady, you are probably a little crack-brained! I know of no child! Go, go! it is very unbecoming in you to bring an old man out of his bed to make a fool of him!"

"No, it is my child I want! I truly seek my child!" exclaimed Marion, almost beside herself. "She must certainly be here! The count, I am confident, received her into his house! Try your best to recollect, dear Martin! The little Madelon!"

"Ah, you are foolish, or else you have got into the wrong box!" replied the old man, more kindly. "Go to your home, good lady! There is no child here, you may depend upon it. I have not left this house for a long time, and should certainly know

something of this affair! Go, go; you are out of your wits! You are sick and need rest! Go, good lady; go and take some sleep!"

Marion neither saw nor heard anything more. There she stood, wringing her hands and leaning against the door; her limbs trembled, her head was dizzy, and for a moment she lost all consciousness. The stroke had fallen too suddenly, and she was wellnigh crushed. After a little she revived, and throwing herself at the feet of old Martin, cried out with heartrending tones: "Martin! Martin! For God's sake give me back my child! She must be here! Martin, have pity on a heart-broken mother! Where is Madelon, Martin? Where is she? Speak, speak, or I die!"

Old Martin was deeply affected. "Rise up, good lady! Rise up!" he said; "I see very well now that you are not imposing upon me; but there must be some mistake here. Are

you really seeking the Count Narbonne—Louis Narbonne?”

“Yes, the Count Louis and his wife Matilda!” exclaimed Marion. “Do not doubt me in the least, good Martin! And now speak, tell me the truth: where is my Madelon?”

“Really, madame, upon the word of an honest man, and in the presence of God, I assure you there is no child here, and of your Madelon I know nothing!” responded the old man Martin, with a solemn voice. “Pray, believe an old servant, who has never soiled his conscience with a lie!”

“Alas, alas! then I am the most unhappy and miserable creature under the sun!” said Marion, with a faltering voice, and sank upon the floor.

Alarmed, old Martin sprang to her relief, pulled the veil from her face, and recognized, with a cry, the niece of his lord.

“My lady, the Countess Brissot!” he ex-

claimed, almost beside himself with wonder and terror. "All saints praise the Lord! Marion, countess! rouse yourself! Oh, dear me, what am I to do?"

With great effort the old man lifted Marion from the floor, carried her into the next room, and laid her down upon a couch. Then he went and brought his wife; and their united efforts were finally successful in restoring Marion to consciousness. She rose up and looked wildly about her.

"Away, away from this house, where sympathy and mercy have no place!" she exclaimed. "Oh, the child! to reject the helpless child, whose lovely innocence would have softened the heart of a tiger! And that, too, after I had pleaded with him for compassion in my letter that was written with tears! And yet my child was rejected and cast without mercy upon the street, helpless and alone!"

"Pray compose yourself, my lady coun-

tess!" implored the good Martin, with tears. "Remain with us! We old people still love you as of old, when you, like a good angel, ruled in the house. Leave us not, Marion! And the count, when he knows—"

"Let me hear no more of him, the heathen!" exclaimed Marion. "No, I cannot remain under his roof. I cannot breathe within these walls. I must away! I must seek my child! Do not detain me, it would be perilous! Let me away! Away, I say!" With a frantic struggle, Marion tore herself away from the arms of the old man and his wife, and escaped from the house. It was in vain that Martin ran after her; in vain that he called her by name, and with tears besought her to return. She vanished like a shadow in the darkness that hung over the gloomy streets, and Martin had to return alone and with sorrow to the house.

Marion, the mother, was almost frantic

with anxiety about her child. Without being aware of what she was doing, she wandered about the streets of Paris, and now and then she would scream at the top of her voice to relieve her sorrowing heart. At last she sank exhausted upon the porch of a church, and remained in a state of unconsciousness until the stir and activity of the coming day wakened her anew to life. Although, with the return of consciousness, there was renewed the sense of her misery, yet the first terrible shock of her heart was over, and she was prepared for calmer thought and reflection. As she pondered the probable fate of her child, a ray of hope suddenly illumined her sorrowing heart. She recollected the conductor to whose care she had entrusted the child on her departure from Strasburg. She knew him to be an honest and a reliable man. He, if any one, could give her the desired information. Probably he took the

poor little one into his own family. "Yes, it is possible. At all events, he is the only one who can give me the needed information and solve this painful mystery."

She rose, descended the porch steps, and walked slowly through the busy streets to the post-house. Often had she to pause and rest, because the terrible agitation of the previous night had fearfully exhausted her. She had paroxysms of fever, accompanied with a torturing headache. But she noticed neither fever nor headache, and thought only of her child, walking wearily on until she at last reached the post-house. After a few moments' rest, she began her search for the conductor. From one and another, of whom she made inquiry, she was dismissed curtly and without any satisfactory information; but she was so intent upon the one object of her heart that she persisted in her inquiries, regardless of failure and contempt. She next

went into the house and pressed her suit with the officers, but with little success. All she learned was that Lasalle had gone to Marseilles or Lyons or some other place, no one knew exactly where. Again the gleam of hope which for a moment cheered her heart was gone, but the thought of her child kept her from utter despondency.

“Well,” she muttered, “I will go to Lyons and Marseilles in pursuit of Lasalle, if I should not find him in Paris. Courage, courage, my heart! for I shall never rest until I have found my Madelon!”

And now she directed her inquiry, not about Lasalle, but after her child. She thought that if Madelon had come to Paris it would be known, for she was such a charming child that, once seen, she could not easily be forgotten. She recollected the day on which she presumed Madelon must have arrived in Paris, and, with the most urgent appeals, she

implored the office-clerks to consult their registers and ascertain whether the child had arrived at that time.

“It is impossible to know that; let us alone, and go!” was the rough and only answer.

Marion did not go, but, folding her hands, pressed her inquiry with tears and with quivering lips.

At last a young man took pity upon the poor lady and consulted the registers. “Yes,” he said, “the child arrived here, but Heaven only knows what became of her! You should not have suffered the child to travel alone, good lady!”

“That is true,” answered Marion, “but I meant it for the best, and could not well do otherwise. I thank you, dear sir. Now I know at least one thing for certain.”

After she had left the office the young man hastened after her. He was deeply affected by her pale and sorrowful countenance and

her manifest anguish of spirit. "Wait a moment, good lady," he said. "We will see whether there is any one here who can give us any farther information. Accompany me; perhaps some one may recollect the young girl."

Marion followed him, whilst the young man asked one and another about the girl; but no one seemed to know anything about her. Weeks had elapsed since the day of her supposed arrival; hundreds of travelers had come and gone, and it was not likely that any one about the office would recollect the little child.

"It is of no use," said the young man, tenderly, to the unhappy mother, who quietly wept. "You must take some other course to find the lost child. Apply to the police; perhaps they can help you."

"I thank you, dear sir," said Marion, and left the depôt with a sorrowful heart. Upon

the street she was again overcome by her sufferings. She sat down and wept in the very corner where Pierre had found the little Madelon in tears. After this outflow of her sorrowing heart, she felt relieved, and again proceeded on her way. But faint from her long fasting, she stepped into a saloon and ordered some nourishment. After a frugal meal she rose to pay, when, to her terror, she found that her pocket-book, containing her little means, was gone. She had either lost it or some pickpocket must have robbed her whilst lying unconscious upon the church-porch.

“I have no money,” said Marion to the saloon-keeper; “take this ring; it is all I have left of any value.”

The keeper looked into the pale face of the poor sufferer, and the anger which began to flush his face was changed into sympathy; for he saw at once that she was no ordinary

woman. "This," he thought, "is not the look of an *impostor*."

"For God's sake, keep your ring, madame!" he said. "You ate scarcely anything; no, no, I will not take your ring! Poor woman! perhaps you have been robbed?"

"Yes, so it seems, and it was very wicked in the thief," replied Marion, sorrowfully. "But no matter; I shall go to Lyons without money and if I have to beg my way! Is it not so, dear monsieur; may not a mother do this for her child?"

Before the surprised saloon-keeper had time to reply, Marion had left the dining-room and disappeared among the crowd upon the street. "Poor woman!" muttered the landlord to himself; "she touched my heart very much by her simple words. Who can she be? She seems to be very unhappy, but she is not a common beggar!"

Yes, truly unhappy was poor Marion. Not

only deprived of her child, but of all the means wherewith she hoped to find her child again.

But God has promised to his afflicted children that, according to their day, so their strength shall be, and no child of faith and prayer has ever found his promise fail. So Marion, instead of sinking under this new trial, was only incited to renewed exertions.

“Take everything from me!” she said to herself. “You cannot deprive me of my God; and he, the all-merciful Father, will be my strength and support! God will direct my steps to my lost child, and with this confidence I will never despair of success whilst I draw the breath of life!”

She then went to the police-station and told the story of her sorrow, and begged for help in this search for her child. The officer to whom she applied listened feelingly to her story, but gave her little hope.

“Paris is large,” said he, “and a child may easily be lost. Probably it has fallen into wicked hands, and the poor child may be used for selfish gains—for begging, or even for stealing! But meanwhile we will see what can be done. Do not give up all hope, good lady. Of course it will cost a great deal of money, but I take it for granted you are not without means.”

“I? Ah, my dear sir, I am poor, very poor, since they robbed me of all I had in this world!” replied Marion, with a touching simplicity. “I have nothing left but my sufferings and my trust in the help of the Lord!”

“Ah, ah! that is bad, good lady!” said the officer. “And have you no relations or friends that could render you assistance?”

“None; no one sympathizes with me!” said Marion, as before. “My only hope is in the mercy of God!”

“But what can we do, then?” asked the officer. “Nothing whatever can be done without money!”

“Nothing? Ah, that is very sad!” replied Marion. “Very well; I will beg and fast and deprive myself of everything, until I have raised the amount necessary, dear sir! But I pray you let search be made after my child, if only as an incidental or a secondary matter. That will not cost you much trouble, and God will bless you for it! I will remember you daily in my prayers!”

“Poor lady!” said the officer. “Be it so. I will do what I can. Yes, that I will, out of regard for you! I pity you. I have also a little daughter at home about the age of your little Madelon; and when I think that she might be lost— Yes, depend upon it, I will do all that lies in my power!”

“The Lord reward you for it, dear sir!” replied Marion, with feeling. “And when

we find the child, the gratitude of a poor mother will be a blessing to you!"

"Dear, good lady!" said the officer. "But where shall we take the child, in case it should be found? To you?"

"No, not to me, because I have no home, no dwelling-place!" replied Marion. "I must depart; travel day and night, to Lyons and to Marseilles, until I have found Lasalle! Of him I shall probably learn something! No, no; I cannot be idle. I must be off at once! You understand it, dear sir, do you not?"

"Yes, truly, I understand that you are a true and an affectionate mother," answered the officer, sympathizingly. "Only go, in God's name, and cast your care upon him. If we should discover the child, I will receive her into my own house until you return from your wandering. Yes, that I will; you may depend upon it. My name is Roland. Look

for me here when you return; and should I not be here, then some one will conduct you to my house."

Marion expressed her thanks from a grateful heart. The friendliness of the officer was like healing balm to her wounded spirit, and soothed her sorrow. Inspired with new hope and strength, she left the kind man and Paris the same day, and began her journey to Lyons. She possessed neither money nor anything worth money, but she had a true heart and the holy love of a mother for her child—that love that endures all, suffers all and overcomes all. She went defenceless and alone, yet not alone; for the mercy of the Lord compassed her path, and the ministering angels lingered about her lonely way.



CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGGAR BOY.

IT was a long and painful journey which Marion undertook out of love for her child. She was forced to endure many hardships, and to go begging from door to door. At last she arrived at Lyons with a little money in her pocket, which she had saved from the charity of kind people. This she carefully hoarded, since she would need money for the child when found, who was as yet too young and weak to endure the hardships with which she herself was hardly able to contend. In Lyons she asked after Lasalle, the conductor. She could not find

him, as he was in Marseilles, and again she had to resume her journey.

“Never mind,” she said to herself. “I must find him some time, even though I travel round the world in search of him!”

When she arrived at Marseilles, she was told that Lasalle was on the road, and would not return until the day after to-morrow.

“Well, then, I will wait until he comes,” said the patient sufferer. She begged her scanty food in the houses; at night she slept upon a straw bed, which cost her but a few sous. She was thus not compelled to use the little money she had saved, since she scarcely ever begged alms in vain. The day on which Lasalle was expected she remained in the street where the post-building was situated, and examined every stage-coach with eager looks. Ten times was she disappointed. At last, about dusk, he came. Yes, that must be he—she recognized him at once—

and now she hastened, with a beating heart, to the post-house yard. The stage-coach stopped, Lasalle descended, and with one leap Marion was by his side, and, seizing him by the arm, asked, with a trembling voice: "Lasalle, what have you done with my child?"

"Why, good woman, are you mad?" said the conductor. "What do you want of me? Who are you? I do not know you!"

"Remember, Lasalle! In Strasburg I committed my child to your keeping, and you promised not to forsake my little Madelon!"

"Alas, alas!" exclaimed Lasalle. "You are— Poor lady! I am not to blame. Wait a moment, I will attend to my most urgent business, and then take you to my house, so as to tell you all I know. Pray, wait a few minutes."

Marion would have waited for days to gain intelligence of her child. Lasalle did not keep her long, but quickly returned and

brought her home to his wife. Here Marion learned what we already know, and which crushed her last hopes. Madelon had, therefore, most likely not gone to her uncle, the Count Narbonne, since she had lost the letter her mother had given her; but even if she had gone there, she must have been repulsed from his home, and Marion knew not where to seek for her child; and it seemed indeed probable that the poor little thing had perished with hunger or cold. It was a hard blow; the poor mother, who had endured the greatest sufferings and hardships, at last gave way. She hid her face in her hands and wept bitterly—wept as if her heart would break.

Lasalle and his wife for a long time tried in vain to comfort the poor woman. At last they expressed the hope that some kind man had taken pity on the little one, and at least saved her from starvation. Madelon must

still be in Paris, and an advertisement may be all that is necessary to find her.

“Try this as a last resort, good lady,” he continued. “It can, at any rate, do no harm, and I will not let the cost burden you. If I had not been sent away from Paris so quickly, I would not have left your poor child in such a condition.”

At this suggestion Marion felt renewed courage, for a ray of hope once more cheered her sad heart, and but a ray was needed to renew her spirits.

“Yes, yes,” she said as she wiped the tears in her eyes—“yes, I will try that, I will return to Paris, and on the journey will pray to God that he will let me find my child again! Farewell, Lasalle! Farewell, madame! I will start immediately.”

“No, no, not now,” begged Mme. Lasalle. “Night is at hand, and you are weary. Rest yourself at our house, at least for a few hours.

Am I not right, Lasalle? She cannot leave us now."

"Certainly not," replied Lasalle, heartily. "Take a sound sleep, my lady, and if the anxiety for your child gives you no peace, you can journey farther to-morrow. No refusal! You will lose no time, as the stage-coach starts to-morrow for Dijon—and I will see that you are taken there free of charge, for the conductor is a good friend of mine—whence you will still have one-third of the journey to Paris. Be of good cheer! God will help you!"

Marion consented, for Lasalle and his wife begged her so hard that she could not resist. For the first time since the parting from Louise she was surrounded by friends, and she yielded to their kind solicitations and tarried for the night. But the next morning she had no peace, nor did Lasalle detain her. He took her to the post-house, engaged her a

seat in the stage-coach for Dijon, and compelled her also to accept a few louis-d'ors, so that she might not be forced to appeal to the charity of strangers. Thus Marion departed, and Lasalle sent after her a hearty wish for her success.

Day and night the coach traveled over hill and dale until it arrived at Dijon. As soon as she got out she continued her journey on foot, till, after several days, she came to Melun, whence she could reach Paris in one day. Thus far, hope and the love for her child had supported her courage, but now her strength gave way. Utterly worn out she sat down on a bench before a little inn in the suburb, and deliberated whether she should enter or proceed to the next village, where, perhaps, a kind farmer would let her sleep, free of charge, in a stable or on a haymow. But night was approaching, the town was still an hour's journey distant, and the poor, tired mother

shivered with cold, as winter had suddenly set in with great severity, and her thin clothing was not sufficient to withstand its chill blast.

“Yes, I will remain,” she thought; “better to sacrifice a few francs than reach Paris weak and exhausted.”

When she got up to enter the inn, a boy came up to her and said: “Oh, good lady, I am sick; let me pass the night in your house. I can go no farther; I shall perish if you refuse me!”

Marion stopped and looked at the boy. He was about fourteen or fifteen years of age; his clothing was even more miserable than her own, but his eyes flashed with intelligence, and his entreaty touched Marion’s tender heart.

“I am a stranger here myself, and as poor as you, my boy,” she said; “I do not reside in this house.”

"But I," said a man (who was just stepping into the door, and had heard Marion's voice), with a harsh and rough voice—"I am the master of the house!"

The boy turned immediately to him, and begged him to give him a night's lodging.

"It is not my custom to harbor such a beggarly party!" blustered the landlord. "Pack away instantly or I will set the dogs on you!"

"Oh, have mercy on him, sir!" begged Marion. "Look at the poor boy, how he shivers! Have compassion on him! He would perish during the night, and in this intense cold! Receive him, and God will bless you for such an act of mercy!"

"I will do nothing of the kind; away with him!" exclaimed the landlord. "Go instantly, rascal! Away with you, knave!"

The boy bit his lips, but said nothing, as he cast an angry look at the cruel landlord,



and turned to go. Marion felt the heartiest sympathy for the young lad. "He is poor and helpless like myself," she thought. "He suffers like myself. Madelon, dear Madelon, you will forgive me if I interest myself in him! Wait, boy," she said, hastening after him; "you shall not go away in the darkness of the night! Come, eat with me, and the landlord will give you a night's lodging, if I pay for it!"

"Yes, if you pay for it!" said the landlord. "But first of all let me see your money, for you have not the appearance of being rich!"

"Here is money," replied Marion, showing him several franc-pieces; "and now come, poor lad; come and refresh yourself!"

The boy looked at Marion so gratefully that she felt herself well paid for her sacrifice.

"Thank you!" said the lad. "May heaven repay you, for your kindness has saved my

life! During the last few days I have been strolling about through the country begging, but have not received a sou. A few hard crusts of bread was all that I got. The people are cruel," he added, in a low tone, so that Marion could hardly hear him; "but I deserve nothing better!"

"No matter!" said Marion. "I know how hard it is to beg in vain. But I have also found some sympathy, and hence I cannot refuse when I behold misery, and can help. Come!"

They entered the house and quietly took a seat in a corner of the dining-room. Here they enjoyed a dish of warm soup. Marion was soon satisfied, but the boy ate with a greediness that told her better than words could have done how much he had suffered. Having finished the meal, she gradually fell into a sort of reverie, and was soon thinking of her little Madelon, near whom, alas! there

was no kind heart that would care for her as her mother for the strange boy.

The boy, meanwhile, sat looking at his benefactress with a penetration uncommon for one of his age. He seemed to read her sad thoughts, and seizing Marion's hand, pressed it gently and said: "Good lady, I see plainly that you are in trouble. It is true, I am very young; nevertheless, I might give you some assistance if you will have confidence in me, and I am so grateful to you that I would gladly do anything for you I can."

Marion shook her head. "You, no doubt, mean well, my boy," she said, "but no one can help me except God!"

"Who knows?" replied the boy. "If it is not a secret, tell me your trouble."

"Oh, it is no secret," replied Marion. "I am seeking my child, my little Madelon, who has been lost in Paris!"

"Do you seek a child, a little girl?" ex-

claimed the boy, with sparkling eyes. "Tell me what sort of a child she is. I know Paris well, and at any rate I can help you search, and I will do it. Speak, dear lady, I beseech you!"

Astonished at the zeal of the boy, Marion looked at him. His bright, intelligent eyes revealed so much sympathy and his offer was so kind that Marion could not refuse him; she told her misfortune, whilst the boy listened with great sympathy.

"Do you see," he said, when Marion had ended—"do you see how well it was that you yielded to my request? When you, good lady, interested yourself in me and took pity on me, you did not suppose that I, the miserable beggar boy, would be able to repay your kindness!"

"Who are you?" exclaimed Marion.

"Not much can be said for me," replied the boy; "my name is Oliver, and, young as I

am, I have been very bad. But I wished to reform myself, and for that reason I left Paris and went into the country to look for work, and to earn my bread in an honest way. But I did not succeed. I was turned off everywhere because I had no certificate of good character, and without you I should have perished. But of this we will not speak, but of you—of your child! The little Madelon is about six years of age, is she not?”

“Yes!” replied the mother, in astonishment. “How do you know that? I did not tell you her age.”

“No, but I guessed it,” replied Oliver. “And she has flaxen hair, has she not?—pretty flaxen ringlets falling down her neck?”

“Yes!” exclaimed Marion, with a trembling voice; “how do you know that?”

“Calm yourself, good lady,” said Oliver, laughing. “You shall hear still more. Your

little daughter wore a green silk cloak and a brown dress, did she not?"

"Yes, everything corresponds!" exclaimed Marion, trembling. "Boy, you know where my Madelon is! Speak! Is she alive? Is she well? Is she out of danger? Take me to her!"

"Calm yourself," said Oliver again. "Yes, I know where the little Madelon is; I know her; I can assure you that she is well, although she sheds many tears, and constantly cries for her mother and Pierre; but to go to her is difficult, and requires the greatest precaution!"

"Pierre, did you say?" cried Marion, trembling between fear and hope. "What Pierre is that? You are not deceiving me? you are not trifling with my anxiety?"

"No, no; fear nothing!" replied Oliver. "There is no mistake, no deception. Pierre doubtless found the little Madelon in Paris,

and interested himself in her, as I know that she was stolen from him."

"Stolen? But why?" exclaimed Marion.

"Ah, good lady," replied Oliver, "you little know the paths of crime! Your Madelon, being a pretty child, is stolen and concealed for two or three years where no one suspects, and when the child is forgotten she is brought forth and educated in vice. First, she is instructed in begging, and in all sorts of tricks to excite the sympathy of the people. Her pretty face of itself speaks a touching language. But woe to her if she attempts to keep a sou for herself! She must deliver all, even to the last farthing; and if she does not bring enough to satisfy the avarice of her employer, she is whipped and starved. And after she grows up, then she is taught to steal. She must sneak into houses and stores, or she will be again whipped and beaten. And if she does not, at last, fall into the clutches of

the law, she sinks step by step into the depths of vice, until she perishes in sin and misery. But this only happens after her employers have gained by her all the profit that is possible. And for such a purpose has your dear little Madelon been stolen! I am sure of it, for I know both who and where she is!"

"Oh, this is terrible!" exclaimed the poor mother, wringing her hands. "I must rescue her! I must save her from ruin! My Madelon a thief—a criminal!"

"She shall not become one!" said the boy. "As you assisted me, so will I assist you, even at the risk of my life!"

"Would you, Oliver?" exclaimed Marion, pressing the boy's hand to her heart and covering it with kisses. "Then come; let us go! Paris is not far off, and we may even reach it to-night!"

"No, no; don't be in a hurry!" replied Oliver. "You think too lightly of this thing.

It cannot be done so quickly, good lady. It is possible, but it is attended with dangers of which you have no idea."

"What dangers?" exclaimed Marion, boldly. "I fear no danger when the life of my child is at stake! Come, Oliver! come, boy, at once!"

"If you fear no danger for yourself, Lady Marion, consider the danger to your child," said Oliver. "No, no; not so fast, good lady! We must begin our enterprise with caution and coolness, or all may be lost past recovery."

"But what are we to do, then?" replied Marion. "Stop! A thought occurs to me! The police-officer, Roland, at Paris, is a friend of mine! Oliver, let us make use of the police! It is powerful and will find my child for me!"

"Yes—as a corpse!" replied Oliver, with gravity. "No, good lady, we must keep the

police out of the affair, if we would not fail at the very beginning. It is true, the police could enter by force into the den of thieves, but before they could get to the place where your Madelon is concealed, the little one would be quieted for ever, either by poison or by the knife. If you have courage to make the sacrifice and dare the danger, then I will promise to save the child."

"I have courage, Oliver," said the mother. "I will spare no sacrifice, boy! All, all for my child! Speak! Advise me! You shall see that I can dare death without fear!"

"Well, well, I believe you!" replied Oliver. "And yet you will most likely recoil with horror at what you will have to do! You yourself must venture disguised into the den of thieves, and no one must suspect who you are. You will behold disgusting sights, and must not turn your eyes from them, but must laugh at them! You must associate with

vice as if it were your familiar companion! You must become intimate with one of the most degraded of women; and if you would rescue your child, you must fondle and fawn upon this woman, so that you may gain her confidence! Consider well, good lady, whether you have sufficient strength and nerve to do all this. For if, by word or look, you should betray yourself, your death as well as mine would follow!"

Marion shuddered; nevertheless she said, in a firm voice: "Do not fear for me, Oliver! I will think of my child, and the thought will strengthen me! You—but a boy—know not what a mother can dare for her child! Lead on; I will follow!"

"Good! You can trust me; I will give you aid," replied Oliver. "But more! No one must suspect that you are a woman. You must, therefore, cut off your long hair and stain your face, hands and neck a dark

brown; you must put on boy's clothes; you must, in short, destroy your identity, so that you may pass as a comrade whom I picked up on my journey. Fortunately, they did not know that it was my intention for ever to abandon a life of crime. They will think that I only made a stealing raid into the country, and thus my return will appear quite natural. Ah, little did I think that I should once more enter such a place! But for such a purpose it must be done! You are kind to me, and I am grateful for your kindness. We will attempt a rescue if you have courage!"

"I have courage! I will do anything! I fear nothing!" said Marion, resolutely.

"Well," replied Oliver, "you shall be conducted to the place where she is concealed, and for the rest, we will have to rely upon the assistance of a higher power. It is settled, good lady! To-morrow morning early we depart for Paris!"



CHAPTER VII.

MEETING AGAIN.

THE next evening, about twilight, two boys were seen passing through the gates into the city of Paris. It was not difficult to recognize Oliver in the one, but the keenest eye could not have detected in the other Marion, the faithful mother. Her short hair, dark complexion, and, more than all, her male attire, rendered any recognition of her identity almost impossible.

Boldly she walked by the side of Oliver, who continued to instruct her how to conduct herself, and especially enjoined her to assume a confident air toward "*old Victory*," the proprietress of this den of thieves.

"Only remember always to call her madame," said he; "she is exceedingly vain, and if you are skillful in your flattery and compliments, you cannot fail to win her favor. And don't forget that your name is now Robert. No one must suspect your disguise, or all will be lost! Have you the money which we intend to give to the old woman?"

"Certainly!" replied Marion. "Do not give yourself any concern about that, good Oliver! I feel within me a strength and hope that can only come from God. Oh, Madelon, oh, my child, the thought of you enables me to overcome all difficulties!"

"Verily, you are a true mother!" sighed Oliver. "Ah, why had I not such a mother?"

"Poor boy!" replied Marion. "But I will be a mother to you if all succeeds! Yes, that I will, for you deserve it."

"I?" replied Oliver. "Ah, you forget that

I have been for years the companion of the most wicked people, to whom I am about to conduct you."

"No, I have not forgotten it, boy," said Marion. "But I also think of what you told me about your efforts to keep yourself free from the sins of these wicked people. You cannot be blamed that when a child you fell into the hands of these wretched creatures. As yet you have not been a partaker of their sins. You have not robbed or stolen; you are only a beggar."

"No, I have never robbed any one," said Oliver. "When they tried to force me into such wickedness I left them. I was horrified at the very thought of robbery. I will never, God helping me, be guilty of such a sin, for I see the end of those who take the road of crime! But enough. We will not now think of Oliver, but only of you and of Madelon, the little captive. Be careful of your whole

demeanor, and of every word you speak. For consider that all depends upon a successful disguise."

"I have considered it all the way of our journey," answered Marion. "No look, or gesture, or abhorrent shudder shall betray the purpose for which I have entered the society of criminals. Come! only come! To rescue her child from such a horde of ruffians and from such a future, every true mother would risk her life. Let us hasten, Oliver! I long for the moment of trial, and surely God will give me strength to endure it!"

"We are at our journey's end," he said, softly. "Do not forget you are now called Robert, and that you are an orphan boy from the neighborhood of Milan!"

A firm grasp of the hand was Marion's only answer. Oliver drew a long breath, and then pulled the bell in a peculiar way—one, two, three times. Instantly shuffling steps

were heard in the house; a bolt was drawn, and a sharp, grating voice asked: "Who is there?"

"Oliver, the Satan's-finger!" replied the boy. "Open, old Victory! I bring money and company!"

"Vagabond, where have you been keeping yourself these days?" replied the voice from within, whilst other bolts were drawn aside. "We thought you had deserted us, or that you had been found out by the blood-hounds of the police, and that we would never see you again! Where have you been? Hold! who is that boy there?"

"Who should it be?" replied Oliver, fearlessly, to the old woman, who, meanwhile, had opened the door and held a burning taper before the face of the boy's companion—"who should it be, old mother? A recruit called Robert! A cunning boy who is already light-fingered! There are two louis-

d'ors! I thought the boy was good for us, and brought him along. If he does not please you, mother, send him away at once!"

"Oh, madame!" said Marion, boldly, and looked the ugly old woman in the face with a daring, bold eye, "dear, good madame, you certainly will not send me away! You will give me a trial first, will you not? It is true, I cannot do much as yet; but I have the will, and Oliver has told me so much about you that I would gladly remain with you!"

"Has he? the rogue, the good-for-nothing fellow, the scamp of a boy!" replied the old woman, with repulsive grimaces of friendliness. "Well, we will see! You are a pretty boy! You bring money with you! Well, walk in; you shall have something to eat and drink! Come, come!"

"Ah, how kind you are, good Madame Victory!" exclaimed Marion, with affected

smiles, and then taking the dirty hand of the woman, she drew it to her lips. "I thank you, dear mother! I will love you dearly; yes, that I will!"

"Rogue!" exclaimed the old woman, and, with a vulgar laugh, patted Marion on the shoulder. "Look; you please me! You are far more polite than that blockhead Oliver! Well, only walk in! You may for the present remain here, and we will see what is to be done with you. Walk in quickly; it is cold! Go before, Oliver. Show the handsome boy the way!"

Oliver at once seized Marion's hand and led her through a long passage leading to a back room, from which came sounds of vulgar songs and revelry. Meanwhile, the old woman carefully locked the door.

"Well done!" whispered the boy to Marion. "Now we are safe; for if the old woman once takes a liking to any one, she is ever well

disposed to him afterward. Only continue as you have begun."

Oliver now opened the room door, and entered, with his companion, into a spacious apartment, from which came the most offensive fumes. Men and women sat here and there at tables, engaged in singing or talking or playing cards. With all her firmness, Marion was not a little horrified as she entered into this society of low and abandoned people, and it required the sweetest thoughts of her little Madelon to maintain her self-possession. But her maternal love inspired her with fortitude. She overcame her fear and disgust, and sat down beside Oliver, who had taken a seat at one of the tables. Twenty piercing eyes were at once turned upon her, but she returned their suspicious glances with an unquailing look, and even an affected smile.

"Halloa, Oliver, what is the meaning of

this?" cried some one, in a harsh, guttural voice, to the boy. "Do you regard our house as a public rendezvous, that you bring your comrade with you?"

"What is that to you, churl, if Mother Victory is agreed to it?" replied Oliver, boldly. "Hold your tongue, or mother will silence it for you!"

"Insolent scamp!" roared a burly fellow, jumping up as if to lay violent hands on Oliver. But the boy remained quietly in his seat, and only leered upon the old woman, who shortly before had entered the room, and, with her arms akimbo, was now looking on with a face flushed with anger.

"Quiet there!" she exclaimed, with a masculine voice—"quiet, impudent fellow, and start no quarrel with the boy! You vagabond! For eight days you have not handed over to me a single sou, and yet you dare to speak like a braggart against Satan's-finger,

who has put money into my pocket! Never dare it again! Down with you, or not another drop of liquor shall moisten your lips!"

The resolute manner of the old woman, and especially her last threat, abashed the fellow. He sat down again at his place, mumbling to himself: "But it is not according to order to allow every silly boy to enter here!"

"Aha!" broke out the old woman anew; "you probably intend to tell me whom I am to receive into my house and whom I am to cast out! Then you will have to get up earlier, churl! I ought to know best who suits here, and now shut your filthy mouth! Yes, yes, my boy"—turning to Robert—"you will soon know who has the command here, and let no one frighten you! It is my will that you remain here, and that ends the matter! Do you understand it, you idlers, you rogues, you good-for-nothing rabble?"

Be of good cheer, my boy! Nobody shall hurt a hair of your head against my will!"

"Ah, madame, how thankful I am to you!" said Marion, with her blandest smile. "Yes, certainly, I will trust implicitly to your protection!" and again kissed the hand of the old woman. "But I hope, when these gentlemen here will learn to know me better, they will no longer be angry with me."

"Angry!" said the old woman, gruffly. "Woe to the man who shall look with an evil eye upon my boy! Who interferes with him interferes with me! Watch, Oliver—Satan's-finger! Let no harm come to your comrade! The boy has good manners, and he pleases me!"

At this she turned about and brought a dish of meat and a jug of wine. "Eat and drink, boys," she said; "you have earned it! And I see already that you are mutually suited, and shall always accompany each

other in the pursuit of gain. There! refresh yourselves."

It is true, Marion felt disgusted with the very idea of eating in the society of these gamblers and thieves, and was about to push the dish away from her; but a look from Oliver checked the sudden impulse, and regaining her self-control, she partook of the refreshments, which she praised very much. Old Victory listened to her with evident satisfaction, and seemed to be wonderfully pleased with Marion's beautiful face.

"All right, all right," she said; "we will live agreeably together, I hope."

With these words she went to the bar, which stood in one corner of the room, and dismissing Oliver and Marion from her mind, gave her attention to the guests. Their number gradually increased, and as all wanted either food or drink, or both, Victory did a profitable business. Marion quietly observed

the doings of these people, and restrained any outward expression of her disgust.

"It will prove successful, Oliver," she said, after a while, softly, to the boy. "It is true, my inmost heart revolts at the sight of these people, but I will try to keep a sunny face and pleasant looks. And now I am going to offer my services to Victory in helping her to wait on the people."

"Do! that is a capital idea!" replied Oliver, quickly. "She will consider it a great favor, and by it we shall perhaps be able to carry out our plan more speedily."

Marion rose at once and approached the old woman, who, burdened with dishes and tumblers and bottles, was hastening from one table to another.

"Permit me, dear madame," she said, courteously; "I have finished my meal, and would like to help you."

"Would you, indeed?" replied the woman,

in her most friendly manner. "I must say that you have the right respect for old age, my son. Well, you may help me. There! carry this wine to that red-haired fellow yonder, and this dish of sausages to that roaring churl! He bawls as if he would burst. And mind, let no one give you a saucy word, for I am 'old Victory,' and you are under my protection. Now take it, boy, quickly!"

Marion took it, and attended to the business she had voluntarily undertaken with an aptness and a quickness that raised her still higher in the esteem of the mistress of the establishment. Of course she was disgusted with the vulgar rudeness of this company, and her delicate womanly feelings were all the while wounded. But she said to herself, "I must endure all this for the sake of Madelon," and then gave renewed attention to the old woman's customers.

Marion could not have adopted a surer

method of gaining the favor of the ugly Victory than the one which was prompted by maternal instinct. And besides, it had this advantage, that whilst it left her comparatively unobserved, it gave opportunity as she went to different parts of the room to make such observations as might afterward be of great service to her. The boisterous festivity in the den of thieves continued till after midnight, when gradually the guests retired to their various lodgings in the house, until Oliver, Marion and Victory were left alone in the room.

“This will do,” said Victory, after they had put the room in order. “You can go to rest. Oliver, take the boy with you into your room. To-night he may sleep there, but after to-morrow he must sleep with me in the ante-chamber. I intend to do well for the lad. He can be more useful to me in the house than abroad, and I have long wished for a boy

who could assist me in attending to the guests."

"Good-night, dear madame, good-night!" said Marion, and quickly departed with Oliver. A small closet, in which there stood an old arm-chair and a bed, was their place of lodging. Oliver locked the door after him, and then, with a pleasant smile, approached his comrade, who sat in a melancholy mood, with her head upon her hand.

"Why so sorrowful, Marion?" whispered the boy. "Everything is going on well! Victory is happily deceived, and you conducted yourself admirably this evening! Courage, good, faithful mother! The success of our project appears more certain to me now than I ever dared to hope!"

"But how," asked Marion—"how are we to remove the child from the house, when so many eyes are watching us? My hope is less now than before, and it has cost me great

exertion, with my feelings of depression, to keep up the dissimulation. Ah, Oliver, it will be difficult for us to carry out our plans!"

"Patience, patience!" replied the boy. "Only continue to establish yourself in the confidence of old Victory. It may not be long before you will be allowed to see your daughter, and perhaps Victory will commit her altogether to your care, and entrust you with the keys to her cell. If we once gain them, we can manage the drunkards in the house more easily than you suppose. Only be patient and courageous, and the victory is certain. Of course it will be difficult for you—so pure of heart—to endure the grossness of these people; but consider, it is only a temporary sacrifice of your feelings, which looks to a blessed reward. Courage, dear lady, and all will end well!"

"Doubt not my courage," replied Marion. "Love for my child will give me strength to

overcome! Oh blessed thought! I am now under the same roof with Madelon! I wonder whether she suspects her mother is near?"

"Patience!" said Oliver. "I doubt not but that you shall soon see her! But that moment—so happy to you—is the very one that I most fear. Do you think you will be able to control your feelings at the sight of the child? Be careful not to arouse Victory's suspicion, for that would be ruin to us!"

"I know it, and I will endeavor, by the help of God, to control my feelings when the happy moment comes!" replied Marion. "Oh, if it were only here! Surely, Oliver, I will be able to endure this trial!"

"Heaven grant it!" said Oliver. "But you must be very much exhausted by the labors and excitements of the day, so go and take your rest, for to-morrow will bring with it new trials."

Marion felt that she needed rest, and soon

reposed her weary limbs upon the bed, whilst Oliver nestled himself in the arm-chair. Thus they slept until the shrill voice of old Victory roused them to renewed activity.

Marion's trial was keen and oppressive. Not only had she to live in the midst of scenes the most painful and abhorrent to her refined and womanly sensibilities, but in the constant dread of discovery, which would have given her over, if not to death, to imprisonment for life. But heavy as was the trial, she never faltered. Love gave her strength and endurance, so that she kept up the unnatural dissimulation until the time came for such true maternal love to receive its reward.

The attachment of old Victory to Robert—as Marion was called in this den of thieves—became so strong that the pretended boy was admitted to her most intimate and unre-served confidence. One day she took Marion

by the hand and conducted her, through various apartments, to one of the most distant rooms in the large, old-fashioned building.

“Here we have a little girl, and I will place her under your care,” she said to Marion. “I am getting old, and this running hither and thither is fatiguing to me, but you are young and can attend to her as well as myself. You will have nothing to do but to take the child her meals daily, and to take care that she does not become melancholy in her loneliness, because that may be injurious to her beauty, which may be of great use to us hereafter.”

“I understand,” replied Marion, in a subdued voice. She trembled with emotion, and was ready to faint, as she thought of the meeting so near at hand. But then it was the crisis of her conflict, and she must triumph in the struggle or all would be lost. She tried to calm the tumult of her mind; she pressed

her hand upon her throbbing heart; she fervently prayed that God, for Christ's sake, would grant her strength and resolution.

Victory opened the door. Marion cast a hasty glance into the apartment. She saw flaxen ringlets, a gentle form; and now the little one turned her face to the door. Yes, yes, it was Madelon, the long-sought-for child!

The mother, unable to control her feelings, uttered one subdued scream at the sight of her beloved child. Victory looked at her with surprise. Marion saw that everything was at stake, and, with an artifice just suited to the peril of the moment, she repeated the scream, with the exclamation: "How strange! I know this little one! Did I not see her once at the circus-riders'?"

"Exactly so!" replied Victory, so luckily beguiled; not dreaming that Oliver had informed Marion how she had obtained posses-

sion of the child—"exactly so! It was from there we kidnapped the child, because she was such a charming little beauty. Now, Madelon, be cheerful! Here is Robert, who, in my place, will hereafter visit and take care of you! Give him your hand, and behave yourself well! Do you understand?"

With a sad countenance Madelon reached out her hand, which was warmly grasped by Marion. "She is so neat," she said to Victory, in order to conceal her emotion. "Come, little one! Be cheerful! Laugh, shout, leap! Be lively!"

"That is right, my boy," said Victory, with evident satisfaction. "Manage the little one in that way, and she will soon become cheerful and happy. Play with this lad, Madelon! I will let him remain an hour with you!"

"I do not like to play; I am sorrowful!" replied the little one. "I want to go to my

mother or to Pierre! Let me go away, old lady! I will not stay here!"

"Oh yes, you will!" replied Victory, laughing. "Only be patient! In less than six months you will become reconciled to your place. Lively, Robert! Try to put other ideas into her head; and if you succeed in making her contented and cheerful, it will be remembered by me to your advantage. You can remain here for one hour, and I will then call for you."

With these words she departed, and Marion was left alone with her child. As soon as Victory's footsteps died away in the distance she rushed to Madelon, caught her up in her arms, pressed the child to her bosom, covered her sweet little face with kisses, whilst tears of joy fell upon her ringlets. "Oh Father in heaven!" she exclaimed; "what joy, what happiness! I shall die of ecstasy!"

A little more and she would have dis-

closed herself to Madelon; but happily the child restored her to her accustomed prudence.

“You are so good,” said the little one, and fondly stroked the cheeks of the happy mother. “Take me away from this place, will you?”

These few words brought Marion to a sense of her critical condition. She managed to control her feelings, and carefully watched every word. If Madelon should recognize her mother, and in her simplicity betray the secret, how dreadful would be the results! With this cautionary dread, Marion repressed her ecstatic feelings and only embraced the child silently, with tears and caresses, which Madelon lovingly returned.

“How good you are,” she said, “and what a lovely voice you have! If you were not a boy, I should think you were my mother! She spoke exactly like you, and was just as

kind to me. Ah, if I only could go to her again !”

“Have patience, dear, dear child!” replied Marion, laughing and weeping at the same time for joy. “You surely know that God protects good children, and he will protect you !”

“Yes, that my dear mother always told me !” said the little one, and looked thoughtfully at Marion. “Yes, yes ; of course you are not my mother, yet I love you, love you dearly, and shall no longer be so sorrowful ; that is, if you will come to me every day ! Will you do that ?”

“Yes, yes, that I will ; as often as I can !” replied the happy mother. “But then you will have to be very kind to Madame Victory, or she will not allow it !”

“Yes, that I will ! I will smile and say ‘dear madame’ to her, and even kiss her ugly hand !” said the little one. “And then

you will come right often, and we will talk together!"

"Certainly, certainly!" replied Marion, and again caressed her child and continued talking. She was quite startled at the return of Victory, for she had no idea of time when with her child. The little Madelon rushed toward her with a joyful countenance and really kissed her hand. Victory looked at her with astonishment.

"See here, boy, do you know," she said to Marion, "that this is the first time Madelon has smiled since she has been with us?"

"Aye, yes!" said the little one; "but Robert is so good to me, dear madame, so good! If he would remain with me, I would always be happy!"

"That is the way to talk, little one!" replied Victory, very graciously. "Well, if he cannot always be with you, he shall come often, if you will only behave yourself. Yes,

that he shall! And you too shall soon be allowed to come forth from your cage! But come, Robert, the guests are waiting."

Marion cast another look at her child, and then followed Victory. Her heart was now light and joyous, as she had seen Madelon again, and knew that she was living and well.

Several weeks passed away without any opportunity of escape. But Marion waited patiently, and kept up the unnatural dissimulation even toward Madelon, for she must not know that it was her mother who came daily to see her. One day Oliver came with a joyous face, and whispered to Marion:

"This night the band intend to go out on some wicked enterprise, and Victory will be left alone in the house. Take this package. It contains a powder to produce sleep. This evening mix it with the wine for the old woman. The hour of rescue has come, but we must be very careful or all may fail."

One look assured Oliver that he might trust Marion to do her part. At midnight all the men suddenly left the house. Victory accompanied them as far as the door, and during this time Marion mixed the soporiferous powder with Victory's wine. She had scarcely done this before the old woman returned and with one draught emptied the glass. Marion breathed freely again, and busied herself about the room to conceal her feelings. Victory soon felt the effects of the powder. "Quick, Robert!" she said. "I am sleepy! Extinguish the lights and go to bed."

"Do you go, madame," replied Marion. "I will stay and put things in order, so that you may find the room ready for you tomorrow morning. Only let me do this, for I am not sleepy."

"Brave boy!" mumbled the old woman; "always active, always ready for work! Very

well. Take care that the lights are all put out and then come, for you need rest."

With these words she retired to her room, overcome with sleep. Scarcely had she gone when Oliver came creeping from behind the bar, where he had kept himself concealed.

"All goes on well," he said, rubbing his hands joyfully. "In one hour from this we will be free and in safety!"

"And why not go to work at once?" asked Marion, trembling with anxiety to rescue her child.

"Because Victory has the key of the house under her pillow, and without it we cannot escape," replied Oliver. "She must first be soundly asleep before you can venture to get the key."

"That is true," said Marion. "We must have patience."

Slowly the hour passed away. At last Marion resolutely seized a light, and walked

with a firm but gentle step into the sleeping apartment of the dreaded Victory. She well knew that in this moment all was at stake. She knew that if Victory should wake there would be an end of their scheme, if not of their lives ; but her maternal love was stronger than her fear. In the ante-chamber she placed the candlestick upon a table, quickly opened the door, and softly approached the bed. Her heart beat faster as she reached out her hand for the key. She made one grasp and it was hers. Victory slept so soundly that Marion glided out of the room like a shadow, locked the door after her, and hastened to her child. Oliver accompanied her. They found Madelon asleep, with tears on her cheeks, and as Marion took her into her arms, the child, in her first waking, looked about her wildly, as if in a dream.

“What do you want, Robert?” she asked.
“It is still night!”

"Yes, yes, my child!" replied the happy mother, in a whispering tone. "Only be quiet: don't speak! I want to take you to your mother; but you must be very quiet!"

"I am quiet already!" said the little one, softly. "Oh, my mother! I shall see my mother again! Quick, quick; take me to her!"

There was no need of further persuasion. Marion hastily departed with her child. She flew through the halls and corridors. Oliver opened the door of the house for her, and there was no one to hinder. In a moment they stood in the open air in the street, with the prison behind them, and in one loud scream Marion gave vent to her pent-up feelings.

"Madelon, my child!" she exclaimed. "I am your mother, and you are free! Merciful God, I thank thee!"

"Enough! Not another word!" said Oliver. "Follow me closely; we shall not

be perfectly safe until we are far away from this house of crime !”

Marion saw the necessity of silence. She pressed the child to her heart, and, at the side of Oliver, hastened on in the darkness of the night. All without was dark, but in Marion’s heart there was light, for the mother had found her lost child. Yes, Madelon was found, and the little heart, in its quickened pulses, was now touching hers.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE END.

BEFORE Oliver undertook the rescue, he had provided a place of refuge, to which he now conducted the happy mother, with her child. It was a small, unfurnished room in a remote part of the city, but Marion felt serene and happy as if in a little heaven. Oliver shared with her the joy of success in a most perilous enterprise, but his joy was shaded with anxieties about the future.

“What is to be done now?” he asked the next morning, somewhat sadly. “Here we are without money or work, and we cannot live on air. What shall we do?”

“Never mind,” replied Marion, carelessly.

“Since I have recovered my dear Madelon I feel no further fear or care. I have a gold pin which you can sell, and after we have spent the proceeds we will see what is next to be done. My Madelon, my sweet little Madelon, since I have recovered you I will cheerfully endure all the sufferings which the Lord may appoint me! Darling child! beloved, dearest Madelon! Oh what joy fills my heart as I look into your face, press you to my heart and cover your sweet lips with kisses!”

Oliver shook his head, but felt he must not cast a shadow over the sacred joy of the happy mother, and hastened to dispose of the gold pin. He sold it for a small sum, made a few purchases of several articles of nourishment, and then returned to Marion. They lived on their scanty means without any concern for the future, until all the money was spent.

“What now?” asked Oliver.

“Yes, what now?” repeated Marion, thoughtfully, casting a tender look on little Madelon, who was playing with an old newspaper—“yes, what now? Is there nothing else we can sell, Oliver?”

Oliver shrugged his shoulders. “I know of nothing.” Both were silent.

“Look here, mother, at the large letters!” said Madelon, suddenly interrupting the silence.

Marion looked at the newspaper with an exclamation of joy. “Now we shall no longer want!”

“How so?” asked Oliver, with surprise.

“Look here at this largely-printed notice. It is an advertisement for an exhibition to be given in the suburbs by my old friend, Lemaire! Quick, Oliver! Now we are beyond all need! Father Lemaire will receive us with great pleasure! How fortunate for us

that he is just now in Paris! Come, let us go to him!"

Oliver was ready at once, and they soon found the abode of Lemaire. As Marion expected, she was received with a hearty welcome, and Louise wept for joy at meeting again her beloved Marion. The joy reached its height when Marion declared her intention to remain with her friends and share with them their fortunes.

"Well done! Well done!" exclaimed Father Lemaire, joyfully. "Now our star of hope will rise again! We have not had much success, but now the tide of prosperity will set in again, and our treasury will be full! Florentine, hasten to the printing-office and attend to the advertisements, and we shall repeat the splendid success we had at Chalons!"

"But the sweet little Madelon?" said

Louise. "Do you not intend to entrust the child to your uncle?"

"No, never!" replied Marion. "Never! I will never part again with my jewel! The first separation cost me too much sorrow; besides, who knows whether Count Narbonne will interest himself in the little one?"

"But do you not know that Count Narbonne has issued a proclamation in the newspapers, offering a high reward for any information respecting the lost child?" said Louise. "Yes, we have read it! Consider well, Marion, what you are doing!"

"I have decided," replied Marion, after a little reflection. "No, I will never separate myself again from my child. I would be in constant anxiety for her welfare. No, no; we will remain with you, unless you send us away!"

"Then you will never leave us!" replied Louise, pleasantly. "We are happy to have

you with us, and we will love you and your child as if you were our sister!"

So it was settled that Marion should not go to her uncle, but remain with Lemaire, and take her former part in his exhibition, for the support of her child. As she again appeared in public, she renewed the old enthusiasm of the people; the papers were full of complimentary notices of her performances, and Father Lemaire was cheerful. He was not deceived in his expectations. Money literally poured in upon him, and whenever Madame Chlorinde appeared the house could not hold the people.

It happened one evening that Marion performed a part in which she appeared with a child. The child was her own little Madelon. She had scarcely begun to speak, when suddenly there came an outcry from one of the boxes and another from the gallery, to the serious interruption of the play.

“Marion!” one voice cried.

“Madelon, dear little Madelon!” the other shouted.

“Silence!” roared the indignant audience.

The performance went on; but suddenly there appeared upon the platform two persons from different directions, and who evidently did not belong to the performers. The one—a fine-looking boy—impulsively seized little Madelon; the other embraced Marion. The audience grew angry. Father Lemaire tried in vain to expel the strangers, and in the confusion which followed, the performances of the evening ended.

“Madelon, sweet little one, have I at last found you?” exclaimed Pierre. “Don’t you know your old friend?”

“How could I forget you?” said Madelon, with a face beaming with smiles. “Look here, mother; this is Pierre, my good Pierre!”

Marion did not hear. She was lying in the arms of the strange gentleman, who was unceasing in his fond caresses. "Marion, you naughty child!" he said. "How long and anxiously we have sought, and how happy at last to find you!"

"But, gracious count—"

"Nonsense, *count!*" exclaimed the stranger. "Your uncle, dear child! I am your uncle! Give me always this name! You have much to forgive, but I was mistaken, and was not undeceived until my return from Italy! Now I know all! I know that you are innocent of any intentional wrong; know that you intended to entrust your child to me; know all until the moment you left my house, resolved never to return. We longed for you; wept for you, Marion; we did everything to find you out. The fame of Chlorinde attracted us to the exhibition, and here, as if directed by Providence, we have found you, so long and

painfully lost! Forgive me, dear Marion! From this time you shall be one of our household again, and we will seek by love to repair the injury we have done you! Will you follow me, Marion?"

"Yes, gladly, my uncle," replied Marion, "were it only for the sake of the child! Madelon, Madelon, where are you?"

"Here, mother! Only look here! This is Pierre, of whom I have told you so much!"

"Pierre? Oh thanks!" exclaimed Marion, as she embraced the boy. "You, you are the one who had pity upon my poor little daughter when she was helpless and alone in the streets of Paris! Dear, dear boy! how can I thank you? Only look here, uncle; this is the boy to whom I am indebted for the safety, the preservation of my child!"

"He shall find me thankful, also; yes, that he shall!" said Count Narbonne. "But now let us all go to my house, so that my good

wife may rejoice with us. She will be so happy! Come, follow me!"

All resistance was in vain. Marion, Madelon, Oliver and Pierre had to go with the count, and Father Lemaire promised to join them the next day. Their arrival made quite a sensation. The countess received Marion as a sister, and old Martin was overjoyed at her return. The evening was passed in listening to the wonderful adventures of Marion, and it was late when Pierre returned to the house of his mother to tell her of his good fortune, and that Marion and her child were coming to see them the next morning.

Early the next day a coach stopped at the house of Mme. Thierry, when Marion, her little daughter, Count Narbonne and the countess alighted and entered the little room that had once offered a refuge to Madelon. With an exclamation of joy, Madelon rushed to the arms of Mme. Thierry, who, weeping

tears of happiness, lovingly pressed the child to her heart.

“Good lady,” said Marion, with deep emotion, “where shall I find words to express my thanks? You were so kind to my child! Never, never shall I be able to repay your kindness!”

Mme. Thierry rose to her feet, stared in wonder at Marion, and exclaimed: “What do I see? *You* the mother of the sweet little one! I have not been deceived! Marion, darling child, do you not remember your old nurse, Jeanette?”

“Jeanette! *Good* Jeanette! Truly, you *are* Jeanette!” exclaimed Marion, in the greatest surprise. “Dear, good Jeanette, I thought you were in your grave long ago! What happiness to see you again!”

“God be praised that I have lived to see this blessed moment!” exclaimed the trusty woman, with tears. “Child, beloved child, I

am so happy! Quick, Pierre, the caskets! Marion, you will see that I have been faithful to my trust!"

Pierre, having anticipated his mother, had already placed the caskets upon the table.

"All this is yours!" she continued rapturously. "I have preserved it for you! I knew very well that you would return at some future day! Take it; it is the hereditary portion of your unfortunate, noble father, the Count Saint Foix!"

"Truly, this is a wonderful providence of God!" exclaimed the Count Narbonne, deeply moved. "These diamonds and, still more, these papers—how we searched for them! Marion, what a fortune! These papers restore to you as a possession all the estates of your father! The government has hitherto managed them; but now you have only to present these documents and they revert to you as your rightful inheritance. How myster-

ious are the ways of providence! It was love that prompted Marion to give up her child; it was love that received her; it was the faithful love of a mother that, regardless of all hardships, wearisome journeyings and perils of life itself, never gave up the search for her child until that love was crowned with success, and held in its embrace the object that was *dearer* than life. Marion, dear Marion, God has blessed you! You have your reward!"

Marion pressed her child to her heart and silently prayed to the God of the widow and the orphan, and praised him for his wonderful grace and mercy. She had reached the end of her trials as a mother; and whilst weeping endured for the night, joy came in the morning. Her heart was full of grateful thoughts of the goodness of the Lord, and her lips were full of his praise.

But Marion was not alone in this blessing

of heaven. All who shared with her their sympathy and kindly help, in the time of need and sorrow, were now the happy participants of her joys and unlooked-for fortunes.

Marion now lives in her ancestral home, with Madelon, her dearest jewel; with Pierre and his mother; Father Lemaire and his whole family, including the good and faithful Louise; and the valiant Oliver, through whose courage Madelon had been rescued from the hands of the wicked. This is now the family in the old mansion. Count Narbonne and his wife often mingle in this circle of grateful friends; and it would be hard to find, in the wide world, a happier group of loving hearts than these whom a kind Providence gathered from their various trials and separations into a happy household in the old homestead.

Love had conquered at last; for

“God is love.”



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